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Standard

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Casual

THE CHEVROLET SET

I was in Tupelo, Mississippi, for the big George Jones and Tammy Wynette reunion and saw right away that the whole thing was going to work out badly for the president and Mrs. Clinton and that there was nothing David Gergen, or even the new and improved Gergen, Dick Morris, could do about it.

My sister, who recently became a star on *The Young and the Restless*, had flown my mother and father, and then herself and her new boyfriend (another very *Young and Restless* co-star), to Oxford, Mississippi, where I was living at the time, and I thought it might be fun to see George and Tammy "together again," as the tour promotions had it.

The concert was a severely family affair set down in the buckle of the Bible-belt. You could purchase beer, but had to slake your thirst in front of children and Sunday school teachers. Not a few substantial-looking fellows were undeterred by this circumstance. There was a polyester constituency, too, and several old men wearing sharp suits and bolo ties. Women with bee-hive 'dos guarded grandchildren, while comely country girls sent their beaux for beers. Young married couples sought out my sister and her co-star and introduced them to their babies as a not very commendable opening band earnestly sawed its way through cover versions of country hits.

I suppose the crowd divided about where it should have—there were George's boys and Tammy's adorers. George sang about whiskey and women and how he loved both; Tammy sang about the travails of whiskey and men. George wore his trademark silky-'70s shirt; Tammy wore a delicate white dress with much lace and style. George did a little dance, which made one think something had aggravated his behind, something like you would expect if hornets had located there and become disenchanted. Tammy sang "Amazing Grace." A few in attendance decried George categorically out of respect for Tammy.

Others have been troubled by Mr. Jones, though for different reasons. No less a thinker than Garry Wills thought to teach him a good lesson by referring to him as a "second-rate crooner." How that must have hurt. But of course, one suspects Mr. Wills found Mr. Jones crude and ignorant, while Tammy's adorers consider him to be mean and nasty. The distinction is instructive: The latter criticism is made eye to eye, the former from a lofty perch, and it is such a long way down that by the time the message arrives, it sounds like babble.

Which reminds me of something my mother said that night. "If these people have anything to do with it," she opined approvingly, "Clinton won't be president for long." One had only to look around and listen to realize she was probably on target.

Some of those not in Tupelo may recall the "Stand By Your Man" episode from the '92 campaign. There's little need to revisit Hillary Clinton's slighting reference to Tammy's signature song in the soon-to-be First Couple's *60 Minutes* interview, except to point out that if Tupelo is any guide, most Americans continue to stand by the song and to stand, firmly, by the First Lady—of country music. This anthem was Miss Wynette's final solo in Tupelo. "It took me about 20 minutes to write this little song," she told the assembled, "I've been defending it ever since." There followed near deafening applause. Women and men went teary and grew adamant.

I suppose I should throw one the president's way: the Clintons' marriage is better than the one George and Tammy had—the Clintons' has lasted, for whatever reason, and to his credit, the president has never taken to beating Mrs. Clinton about the head.

Still and all, people seem to like G&T better, especially when they sing duets. A favorite begins: "We're not the jet set, we're the old Chevro*let* set." This dandy tune celebrates difference, in the multicultural manner. George and Tammy like being part of the Chevrolet set. They enthuse over Rome, Athens, and Paris—Rome, Georgia; Athens, Texas; and Paris, Tennessee. Home towns for the home crowd, towns like Hope, where our president is from.

Not only is our president from Hope, he keeps saying he's for hope, which is fine, though it doesn't help anyone determine what set he comfortably situates himself in. Are the president and Mrs. Clinton jet or Chevrolet set? That's a hard one, because while in the past the president has been chummy with Barbra Streisand (jet set diva who moonlights for the Democratic party and has appeared on *Saturday Night Live*), no one should be taken aback if in the coming months he tries pickin' and a grinnin' with, oh, Johnny Cash (Chevy set heavy who once went into a cave to find the Lord or die.)

Who knows what kind of music the First Couple will make in the coming months—"Old McDougal sold us the farm" perhaps? Mere speculation. But here's a safe bet: However they duet, it is unlikely to go over with the Chevrolet set.

SCOTT M. MORRIS

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Dinesh D'Souza on Glenn C. Loury

'Let Me Say What The Book Is About'

Glenn C. Loury's review of my book, *The End of Racism* (Sept. 25), is mystifying, because it consistently misrepresents the book's argument and tone; consequently, it argues against positions which I do not hold. Let me, therefore, say what the book is about and then deal specifically with some of Loury's criticisms.

The End of Racism is a comprehensive challenge to the conventional wisdom that racism is the primary cause of black failure. I argue that the main problem faced by African Americans is neither deficient IQ, as suggested in *The Bell Curve*, nor racial discrimination, as alleged by Jesse Jackson and other civil-rights activists. Rather, the book contends that blacks have developed a culture in this country that was an adaptation to historical circumstances but one that is, in many important respects, dysfunctional today.

I point out that some pathologies, such as extremely high African-American crime rates, have the effect of legitimizing "rational discrimination," such as cabdrivers who are reluctant to pick up young black males. *The End of Racism* exposes as fatally flawed America's two contemporary policy remedies: multiculturalism and proportional representation. The book shows that liberal programs such as affirmative action have little to do with fighting racism; rather, they are aimed at camouflaging the embarrassing reality of black failure on merit standards of academic achievement and economic performance.

One of my main conclusions is that even though we now have substantial numbers of Hispanics, Asians, and Middle Easterners in this country, racism remains primarily a black-and-white problem. Many people may not like Korean or Mexican immigrants, but there is no systematic belief that holds these groups to be inferior. Yet four centuries after blacks were brought to this country against their will, the suspicion of black inferiority persists.

This suspicion helps to keep racism alive and so hinders progress toward a race-neutral society. Only by recognizing and confronting cultural pathology and becoming fully competitive with other groups, I argue, can blacks discredit racism and join whites and immigrants in claiming the fruits of the American dream.

As for the book's tone: It is written with a view to being intellectually provocative while at the same time being morally sensitive. None of Loury's examples proves otherwise. In a chapter that disagrees with *The Bell Curve* but which takes the book seriously and explores its implications, I point out that if the IQ theorists are right that there are biological, ineradicable differences of intelligence between races, then "it is hard not to hear the triumphant roar of the white supremacist; 'forget about the legacy of racism and discrimination—these people are naturally stupid.'"

Is there any question that this is why *The Bell Curve* stirred up such angry condemnation? Yet Loury quotes the line as if it represents my personal jubilation: "One might speculate that [D'Souza] actually longs to hear those triumphant roars." This is an outrageous misrepresentation of my views. One of the explicit theses of my book is that the genetic explanation for group differences in performance is misconceived.

Loury takes angry exception to my use of the phrase "*reductio ad Hitlerum*." Actually, this term is not original with me but was coined by philosopher Leo Strauss in *Natural Right and History*, published in 1953. Strauss defines it thus: "A view is not refuted by the fact that it happens to have been shared by Hitler." This is precisely the sense in which I use the term. Anyone who reads *The End of Racism* will see that Loury's other examples are equally misleading.

According to Loury, my discussion of racism's origins as an ideology of European superiority leads to an unambiguous defense of the Enlightenment. This is not so; indeed, I express decidedly mixed feelings about the Enlightenment project, and firmly condemn the consequences of its evolution into the scientific racism of the 19th century. Moreover, I point out that the main opposition to social and racial Darwinism came from evangelical Christians.

My reason for examining the origins of racism is to challenge the view, publicized by Andrew Hacker in *Two Nations* and Derrick Bell in *Faces at the Bottom of the Well*, that racism may be a staple of the human, or at least Western psyche, so that we can never be rid of it. I conclude my discussion by noting that "painful though we may find it to read what people in earlier centuries had to say about others, it remains profoundly consoling to know that racism had a beginning, because then it becomes possible to envision its end."

Loury attributes to me the view that "slavery was not a racist institution." What in fact I do say (citing Orlando Patterson, Bernard Lewis, David Brion Davis, and others) is that historically, slavery has proven to be a universal institution, practiced in ancient Egypt, Mesopotamia, Greece, Rome, China, India, the Arab world, the Americas, and virtually all of sub-Saharan Africa. I point out that even in America, between 1830 and 1860, there were some 3,500 free blacks who owned more than 10,000 black slaves—a historical fact known to scholars, but carefully kept out of public view because it confuses the morality tale of slavery as a racist crime inflicted by white masters on black slaves.

Despite such anomalies, I go on to argue that slavery strengthened American racism, which flourished not because of simple white "ignorance, fear and hate" but because of the contradiction between the principles of the founding and the practice of human bondage. After all, if you believe that "all men are created equal" and at the same time own slaves, then in order to be consistent you are compelled to hold, at some level, that blacks are somehow less than human.

Loury charges me with asserting that "most middle class blacks owe their prosperity to affirmative action." Wrong again. What I write is much more nuanced and entirely defensible: "The effect of affirmative action has been to accelerate the growth of the first sizable middle class in the history of African Americans. . . . This group constituted a distinct social phenome-

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non by the 1960s, as desegregation and antidiscrimination laws went into effect. Yet although scholars debate their precise effect, racial preferences have undoubtedly helped to solidify the black middle class."

Loury accuses me of calling poor blacks barbarians who are incapable of civilization. He cites Elijah Anderson 's remark: "these communities are full of decent people with values no different from D'Souza's or my own." I argue—citing Anderson—that "the inner city is characterized by two rival cultures; a hegemonic culture of pathology and a besieged culture of decency."

My whole point is to call for a social policy that strengthens black people's "culture of decency" and works to end the dominant inner-city culture of irresponsibility. Here is the moral line that needs to be drawn. In an omission that is both hurtful and surprising, Loury omits my crucial distinction between competing inner-city African American cultures; this allows him to saddle me with a view that is a profound distortion of my precisely stated position.

The most serious complaint of Loury's review is that I fail to recognize that black cultural failings are *American* cultural failings (his emphasis). Has he read the book?

Discussing cultural breakdown, here is what I do say: "This is not merely an African American problem; it is a national problem. The American crime rate has risen dramatically over the past few decades, and juvenile homicide has reached catastrophic proportions. Alarming numbers of high school students use drugs, get pregnant, or carry weapons to class. . . . Cultural relativism now prevents liberals from publicly asserting and enforcing civilizational standards for everyone, not just African-Americans."

At the same time, I argue that just as African-American culture has distinctive strengths, it also has developed identifiable weaknesses. These cultural pathologies are most concentrated among the underclass, but in some respects they also extend to the black middle class.

After all, if this is a purely American problem without distinctive ethnic dimensions, then why do blacks who come from families earning more than $60,000 a year score lower on the SAT and many other measures of academic performance than whites and Asians who come from families earning less than $20,000 a year? Why is the illegitimacy rate for poor blacks vastly higher than that for poor whites, and why are college-educated black women between eight and ten times more likely to bear children out of wedlock than college-educated white women? Loury does not dispute my analysis of these problems; he simply writes as though they haven't been raised.

Pointing to the hopelessness and squalor of many American lives, Loury charges that I have "not one useful word to say" beyond urging middle-class blacks to take responsibility for the lives of poor blacks. In fact, I point to the work of Charles Ballard, Kimi Gray, Jesse Peterson, and others who are setting up teen-pregnancy programs, family-support initiatives, community job-training, instruction in language and social demeanor, resident supervision of housing projects, and privately-run neighborhood schools.

I cite black scholar John Sibley Butler about the importance of strengthening entrepreneurial institutions in the inner city, perhaps modeled on the rotating credit associations that have helped poor Koreans accumulate capital and become successful capitalists. And I say that society has an obligation to help as well.

Like Loury, I believe that black cultural restoration depends on strengthening three vital institutions—family, church, and small business. "If blacks can achieve such a cultural renaissance," I conclude, "they will teach other Americans a valuable lesson in civilizational restoration . . . solve the American dilemma, and become the truest and noblest exemplars of Western civilization."

Why Loury has chosen to portray this position as not only mistaken but destructive and dangerous, I do not know. *The End of Racism* is a tough book which faces painful facts, yet it is ultimately a hopeful book that is aimed at building a secure intellectual and moral foundation for a multiracial America. In this project Loury has played a central role, so whatever he thinks of my work, I will continue to benefit from many of his excellent writings.

DINESH D'SOUZA
WASHINGTON, DC

SEVEN YEARS OR BUST

David Tell is right about the unfeasibility of a five-year plan to eliminate the deficit ("Our Kind of Budget Deal," Sept. 18). It took sixty years of hard work by the Democratic majority's offense, from the New Deal through the Great Society, to construct the current culture of profligate spending and fiscal irresponsibility. And our government, if intended to move in any direction, was created to move slowly.

But Tell's pronouncement that "bedrock conservative principle won't have been violated, even if, in the process, the zero-deficit target sadly slips, say, from seven years to eight" is dangerous thinking. The goal set by the GOP last fall has become a battle cry of sorts. Seven years to zero deficit is the last remnant of the GOP's 1994 Congressional platform that the public, and most certainly an unforgiving and skeptical media, will not forget as we approach the deadline. To let this target slip is to open Pandora's box, leaving us with nothing but hope in the end—the hope that government will *eventually* keep its promise.

E. SCOTT JOHNSON
ACWORTH, GA

THREE SCORE AND TEN

Charles Krauthammer is brilliantly right ("A Critique of Pure Newt," Sept. 18) that Newt Gingrich makes a fatal mistake if he thinks that technology or anything else can be the basis for a revolution that will avoid the conservative truths about human nature.

However when Krauthammer says that "people who live longer suffer more disease and disability" he is following Wilfred Gaylin in making essentially a technical mistake. As Dr. James Fries showed in his elegant book *Vitality and Aging*, the longer lives we can expect in the future do not necessarily imply higher medical expenses per person, because the year (or decade) before death does not have to be more costly if we die at 80 than at 70. The good news is that when death comes later, the period of debility, suffering, and medical cost that precedes death from old age is *postponed*, not *lengthened*.

MAX SINGER
CHEVY CHASE, MD

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the weekly Standard

Ending Affirmative Action

If you believe, as we do, that affirmative action is inconsistent with common fairness, and has become irrelevant to the problems of race it was created to address, then perhaps you are disheartened these days. Just a few short months ago there existed a very real prospect of significant reform. But now the issue seems mostly off the table, and the status quo appears more or less secure.

Cheer up. Appearances deceive. If conservatives manage the debate with careful resolve, and if Congressional Republicans go along, this may prove to be a lull before the storm, and nothing more.

Earlier this year, calls for repeal of affirmative action were much the fashion. Pete Wilson endorsed a popular ballot initiative to ban the California state government's practice of race and gender preferences. Phil Gramm promised that ending federally administered affirmative action would be his first official act as president. Bob Dole ordered up a Congressional Research Service review of existing executive branch preference programs, implying that he would move against at least some of them *before* 1997. And then, after minimal debate, Congress actually voted to abolish one such program: a ludicrous FCC tax deferral granted to broadcasters who sold media properties to "minority controlled" enterprises.

With national polls showing broad opposition to governmentally enforced race preferences, and with a number of relevant judicial challenges moving toward Supreme Court review, President Clinton signed the bill that killed the FCC tax break in March. No Democratic president had ever before acquiesced in a restriction of affirmative action. And this Democratic president didn't even complain about it much. Quite the contrary: He instituted his own review of federal preference programs, and blurted out a vision of acceptable government activity that barely left room for them at all.

"I want to know whether there is some other way we can reach any objective without giving a preference by race or gender in some of the programs," Mr. Clinton said at a press conference that month. He was prepared to defend Head Start, college loans, the earned-income tax credit, and empowerment zones—none of them involving affirmative action, of course. But he thought even relatively uncontroversial things like "a minority scholarship program" fell into a "gray area." And of contracting set-asides for minority-owned businesses—a genuinely controversial and central chunk of federal affirmative action—the president said this: "It's difficult to draw a conclusion that they even do what they were intended to do in the first place."

That iced it. The media announced the impending death of a 25-year-long historical era in which the United States government classified its citizens by skin color, gender, and ethnic origin, and dispensed benefits accordingly.

But further evidence to substantiate that prognosis has lately been in short supply. President Clinton, after all, unveiled the results of his administration's preferences study in late July with a surprisingly strident defense of the idea, ritual caveats about quotas to the contrary notwithstanding. This course reversal has apparently cost Clinton no appreciable (further) decline in popularity. Colin Powell, in brief and general recent comments, has echoed the president's current line: Quotas are bad, but racism persists and affirmative action remains necessary. Powell's popularity hasn't suffered, either.

Over on the (definitely) Republican side of the aisle, we have the following situation. Pete Wilson, the first GOP presidential contender to raise a banner against affirmative action, is going nowhere, his campaign a shambles. Newt Gingrich intends to delay House consideration of any affirmative action rollback until his troops develop a comprehensive agenda to empower the disadvantaged. And in a matter of days, the Senate will likely act to "preserve" federal ethnic and gender preferences. Phil Gramm, you see, acting with too little thought for the ultimate success of his ostensible cause, has attached Bob Dole's excellent anti-affirmative action legislation to a vital appropriations bill. No time exists for full-scale hearings and political mobilization. So the Dole language will be

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stripped or neutered, and both men will be needlessly embarrassed.

Expect to hear that affirmative action is alive and well. But understand that what you'll be hearing is wrong. Affirmative action is still dying. In fact, it's probably dying *faster* than it was at the beginning of the year.

On June 12, the Supreme Court issued a decision in *Adarand Constructors, Inc.* v. *Pena* that placed federal race preference programs under the "strictest judicial scrutiny," scrutiny that will "seldom provide a relevant basis for disparate treatment." In the future, no such program may be administered absent a specific finding of discrimination that violates Congressional statute or the Constitution. And the remedies provided by that program must be narrowly targeted to identified victims. Generalized disadvantage in the present, historical discrimination in the past, and the interests of "diversity" in the future are no longer sufficient justifications for the federal government to classify and compensate its citizens differently by race.

No major affirmative action program now employed in the executive branch can survive this test.

President Clinton knows this full well. But he has decided to pretend that he doesn't, for political reasons involving the support of the civil rights establishment and the Democratic votes it presumably represents. To protect itself against the defection of this constituency, the administration now argues, against the clear meaning of *Adarand*, that "inclusion" might still be a significant justification for existing affirmative action programs, and that programs in which race is just one factor in the conferral of benefits might still pass muster.

Adarand itself involved a program in which race was just one factor; the argument is absurd. But it's an argument that Justice Department lawyers will apparently make in defense of any affirmative action program subjected to challenge in federal court. They will offer statistical disparity studies as evidence of systematic nationwide discrimination. That would be the "finding" used to justify the Small Business Administration's section 8(a) contracting set-aside, for example. But even then, it's hard to see how the High Court could accept as "narrowly targeted" affirmative action remedies that usually apply to more than half the nation's population.

So the best the president can hope for is that lengthy, proliferating litigation delays judicial resolution of federal affirmative action beyond the 1996 election (or until he can appoint another justice to the Court). And he'll get away with that, too, unless Congress preempts the courts and forces a debate on legislative proposals that would kill some preference programs early.

Which is where Senator Dole's legislation, the "Equal Opportunity Act of 1995," comes in. Dole's bill, and an identical House measure sponsored by Constitution Subcommittee chairman Charles Canady, would prohibit the federal government—in any decision involving employment or contracting—from granting a preference to any individual or group, in whole or part, on even partial grounds of "race, color, national origin, or sex." The bill would leave unchanged programs that merely expand recruitment and financial opportunity. It would not affect voluntary affirmative action programs adopted by colleges and universities that receive federal aid. And it would not touch the preference plans of private employers at all, on the perfectly sensible assumption that ethnic and gender classifications imposed by the state are a clear priority for prohibition.

In this very public debate, which we hope Republicans will highlight both in Congress and the presidential campaign, Mr. Clinton cannot like his chances. The president will be forced to argue that affirmative action programs, as conducted by the federal government, do not do what we know they do. And—at the same time—that they should not be prevented from doing it.

The administration's July affirmative action review endorsed elimination of any affirmative action program that creates a "quota," preference for the "unqualified," or "reverse discrimination"—along with any program whose "equal opportunity purposes have been achieved." These terms are essentially meaningless, intended to suggest a universe of affirmative action in which the needy are granted a helping hand and nobody ever gets hurt. If one of the myriad preference programs that infect the federal bureaucracy should fall outside the frame of this happy picture, why, the president promises to get rid of it pronto. Just a few weeks ago in California, for instance, he claimed to have "already abolished one I thought was excessive."

He meant the FCC tax deferral that Congress forced him to swallow in March. And he was lying. His own report on affirmative action, released six weeks *before* his trip to California, specifically *defends* that tax break, and mourns its loss. In fact, the report fails to identify a single existing affirmative action program that has either outlived its usefulness or functions in violation of the president's announced "fairness" standards. For the most part, in other words, everything's fine. Mr. Clinton hopes we will all go back to sleep.

If we don't, he has a problem, a contradiction even so accomplished a talker as Bill Clinton can't finesse. If a serious debate over affirmative action takes place next year, he will have to argue that these programs have *succeeded*. And there he will get tripped up. If af-

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firmative action *is* a success in its particulars, it must mean that certain American citizens have won jobs or contracts that they otherwise would not. "Successful" affirmative action involves the advancement of the less qualified over the more qualified—simply on the basis of biology and inheritance. Which is something most Americans will not abide.

Who will win this fight next year? As a legislative matter, prospects for broad-scale reform on the Dole model are probably limited. There are but 54 Republicans in the Senate, and Mr. Dole's legislation, in pure form at least, will surely require 60 votes to overcome a Democratic filibuster. But the debate itself will hasten affirmative action's demise. It will lower the odds for Mr. Clinton's reelection—and thus for a Supreme Court more hospitable to the status quo. It will improve the odds for a more conservative, Republican Congress, one in which 60 votes are within closer reach. And it may help elect a Republican president, who might sweep away a good deal of affirmative action with a single stroke of the pen.

Given Republican courage and persistence, then, one way or the other, sooner or later, federally enforced racial, ethnic, and gender preferences are probably doomed.

—David Tell, for the Editors

Politics

WHAT, US WORRY?

by David Brooks

AT A WASHINGTON STRATEGY SESSION for conservatives last week, Paul Weyrich was pounding the table about the disasters attendant upon the Republic should a lobbying reform dear to right-wing hearts fail in Congress. The next day, Lamar Alexander came to the Cato Institute to declare that the Republican revolution had run aground. Across the nation, conservative activists feared lest Ronald Reagan's national security adviser run for president.

All these hands were being wrung the week that the Senate passed welfare reform by a vote of 87 to 12. In the House of Representatives, Republicans were off to a good start in what looked to be the toughest fight of the revolution—Medicare reform. The effort to pare Medicare reverses the 30-year momentum of Great Society entitlement programs, just as the welfare bill undoes a 60-year-old framework for poverty programs. Surely if there was a week to step back and count some blessings, this was it.

It's said that bull markets climb a wall of worry. The Republican revolution has to scale a fortress of anxiety. No wonder the country has little sense that things are changing in Washington.

On Friday, Sept. 22, by the time the House Ways and Means Committee began its one-day hearing on Medicare, it was clear the major lobbying organizations were willing to live with the Republican plan. They seem to have accepted the deals that Gingrich, in a spirit of compromise, has offered them. The American Medical Association is getting malpractice reform. The American Association of Retired Persons can continue to sell insurance, and may be able to peddle more still. Conservatives are getting medical savings accounts. Hospitals are getting antitrust waivers. Maybe everybody isn't happy, but they are mollified.

Even so, the hearing was beastly for committee chairman Bill Archer. To reduce their exposure to enemy fire, the Republicans decided to hold only this one hearing on the plan, and determined it would last only one day—and all this without even releasing a copy of their bill. Ranking Democrat Sam Gibbons wasn't lunging at Republican neckties, as he had earlier in the week, but he was smoldering mad that there was nothing for him to pick apart. He didn't get the chance to call the Republicans a bunch of Hitlers, as he had on Wednesday, because fellow Democratic Rep. Pete Stark beat him to the punch by likening the proceedings to Nazi trials. Charlie Rangel of New York bombarded Archer with sarcastic questions: Where's the bill? Has the Congressional Budget Office yet determined what kind of savings the bill will generate?

When Archer gets angry his eyes dart back and forth as if he were watching a high-speed Ping-Pong match. But he sat there and took it. The Republican difficulty in establishing a positive mood was captured during the testimony of Roland King, former chief actuary for the Health Care Financing Administration. As he was endorsing the GOP effort, a group of old people wearing "Shame" tee-shirts stood up, shepherded by a young woman in a business suit who was simultaneously offering to arrange media interviews with them. The Democrats had rows of old ladies screaming about death. They held a mock hearing al fresco on the Capitol grounds to demand more hearings inside, where it's air conditioned. The Republicans steered attention back to their actuary, reeling out numbers so dull they made your teeth hurt.

Amazingly, the dullness is working. On Thursday, the *Los Angeles Times* released a poll showing that 60 percent of Americans favor across-the-board increases in monthly premiums. Only 11 percent agree with Sam Gibbons that the program is financially sound.

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(Gibbons said Friday that Medicare was so sound Congress should be throwing champagne celebrations.)

But there is little outright good cheer in conservative ranks. Part of the anxiety stems from differing senses of how fragile the Republican revolution is. On one side are those who fear that Republican power is a rose, beautiful but doomed to wither. Others consider it a sapling that will grow bigger and stronger. More Washington conservatives are thinking flower rather than tree, and so they are a little manic.

Along with that comes a hair-trigger sensitivity to deviationism, a penchant for seeing each setback as a failure instead of just a delay, and a tendency to get gloomy over tactical retreats and while paying scant attention to strategic victories. Consider the welfare bill. Many conservatives in the Senate are low because in the last three weeks they had to make one concession after another to GOP moderates. But the final law, which will probably be close to the Senate bill, is a world-historical change from the current system.

It is true that Republicans endure something akin to what Mike Schmidt experienced at the hands of Philadelphia sportswriters: the thrill of victory and the agony of reading about it the next day. But as all baseball fans know, and conservatives might do well to recall, Mike Schmidt kept slugging for 18 years. ♦

Law

JAILHOUSE BLOC

by Evan Gahr

THE VOTING RIGHTS ACT—already notorious for creating super-gerrymandered congressional districts and an unusual alliance between the Republican party and the Congressional Black Caucus—may soon produce its strangest progeny: prison voting booths.

The tradition of denying the vote to imprisoned felons, which predates the American founding and is enshrined in the laws of 47 states, is now under attack as illegal, and, worse, racist. Inmates in New York state are demanding the franchise. Their argument rests not on some far-fetched legal theory, concocted by jailhouse lawyers, but rather on a reading of the Voting Rights Act plausible to some legal experts.

In a federal lawsuit, a group of maximum-security inmates argue that because New York prison populations are overwhelmingly minority, the state's prohibition on voting by imprisoned felons dilutes minority voting strength—in violation of the Voting Rights Act.

The success of the inmates so far illustrates the degree to which the legal system no longer requires proof of intentional discrimination in civil-rights cases. Merely showing a discrepancy in the racial numbers, "disparate impact," as the prisoners do, may be enough to win—no matter the reason for that discrepancy. Under the Voting Rights Act, the prisoners' claim of "disparate impact" cannot be laughed off. "It's hard to call the case frivolous," says Marc Stern, a lawyer with the American Jewish Congress and a voting rights expert.

There's no doubt that New York's law denying imprisoned felons the right to vote falls disproportionately on minorities. And while disparate impact alone may not have sufficed to establish a violation under the original Voting Rights Act of 1965, Congress changed this in 1982.

In response to a 1980 Supreme Court ruling that the Voting Rights Act prohibits only intentionally discriminatory practices, Congress amended the original act so that a mere technicality like discriminatory intent would not be needed to establish a voting rights violation.

Senator Bob Dole, who along with leading Republicans such as Henry Hyde supported the amended version, explained that he shared the view of the civil rights community that "in some voting cases, it is hard to prove intent."

Now it's unnecessary. Any voting requirement that happens to diminish minority voting strength can be illegal. The result is that the Voting Rights Act, like other pieces of 1960s legislation designed to combat genuine discrimination, now functions primarily as a legal cattle prod for group rights. Perfectly legitimate practices that happen to have a disproportionate, unintended impact on minorities are impugned.

Consider the 47 state laws barring imprisoned felons from voting. Normally, prisoners who challenged laws denying them the right to vote wouldn't get any farther than they do with any of their other zany lawsuits. The 14th Amendment allows states to deny criminals the vote. And courts have generally upheld challenges to these laws—except when they are found to discriminate intentionally, or contain suspect criteria. (A law against voting by wife-beaters was struck down in part because of its suspect gender classification.)

But the game has now changed. Just ask the distinguished residents of the Green Haven Correctional Facility, in Stormville, New York.

During the 1993 New York City mayoral election, a group of black and Hispanic inmates at this maximum-security facility were eager to vote for David Dinkins. All that stood in their way, of course, were

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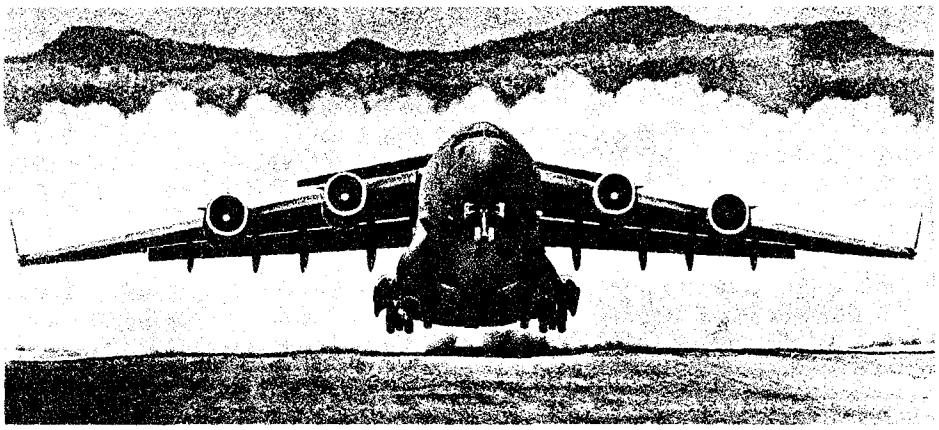

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their convictions for second-degree murder, armed robbery, and drug dealing. But these civic-minded cons didn't want to sit out the election. In September 1993, they challenged the law in federal court.

Their lawsuit, whose chief engineer was jailhouse lawyer Theodore Baker, a convicted murderer now gone to his reward, charges that because blacks are more likely than whites to be in jail for the same crimes, and because the state prison population is 82 percent minority, both the Voting Rights Act and the constitutional guarantees of equal protection are violated by New York's law.

The lawsuit was dismissed by the United States District Court for the Southern District in February 1994. But the inmates had better luck with an appeal argued last December before the United States Court of Appeals for the 2nd Circuit by Andrew Shapiro, then a Yale law student, now a contributing editor to the *Nation*.

Although the appeals court didn't think much of the inmates' constitutional claims, noting that establishing a violation of the 14th and 15th Amendments would require proof of intentional discrimination, it ruled this May that the case should be reinstated largely because it "raises novel and important legal issues" under the Voting Rights Act—and the prisoners should be allowed to try to establish a violation.

They have their work cut out for them. As Stern notes, "It doesn't follow that because you've shown adverse impact, the practice is illegal."

In determining whether a law has illegally diluted minority voting power, courts must consider the "totality of circumstances" outlined by Congress. This "totality" includes whether a requirement has worthy justification, and whether the state enacting it has a history of voting discrimination.

Under these standards, this particular case is a "hard call," says University of Washington law professor Eric Schnapper, who lost the Supreme Court case that prompted Congress to amend the Voting Rights Act. "A reasonable judge could go either way."

Regardless of the outcome, the case should give both liberals and conservatives something to mull over. Are left-liberal civil rights activists, so fond of using disparate impact to advance their cause, willing to make the case that prisoners should vote?

True, armed robbers and convicted murderers don't make ideal poster children for the Voting Rights Act. But their claim isn't much different in form from those of other civil rights litigants who use mere statistics to offer "legal" proof of discrimination and thereby demand remuneration—or to invalidate civil service exams and such when they fail to produce as high a rate of minority success as activists would prefer.

And before congressional Republicans get all huffy over states' being forced to allow criminals to vote, it's worth remembering that they overwhelmingly supported the amended Voting Rights Act, which the Cardozos of the Green Haven Correctional Facility now hope to make a springboard to full civic participation.

If, on purely philosophic grounds, this doesn't give GOP politicians pause, perhaps the specter of newly enfranchised felons will. Republicans should think twice before bowing to any more demands from the "civil rights" lobby. They may unwittingly have granted the Democrats a huge untapped constituency.

Evan Gahr is a** New York Post **editorial writer.

Taxes

SQUEEZE PLAY

by Fred Barnes

ECONOMIC CONSULTANTS Jeffrey Bell and John Mueller broke a taboo when they met in mid-September with the National Commission on Economic Growth and Tax Reform, better known as the Kemp Commission. They raised the issue of the middle class squeeze, the stagnation of average Americans' wages for the last two decades. Bell said, "The workers are getting screwed." The commission's honchos—Jack Kemp, Ed Feulner of the Heritage Foundation, economist Alan Reynolds, staff director Grace Marie Arnett—listened in silence. Given their aversion to discussing the erosion of workers' pay, they also responded coolly to the suggestion that a flat tax might make a bad situation for the middle class worse.

Conservatives are in a state of denial about the income of middle class Americans. It's plainly declined. True, real income rose slightly during the heyday of Reaganomics (1983-1990), more for entrepreneurs than working families. But it dropped sharply in the 1970s and is sinking again in the 1990s. Conservatives rarely broach this subject, and when they do, their purpose is invariably to say the decline is exaggerated (soaring fringe benefits aren't counted as income) or merely a misinterpretation of economic statistics. They never endorse the concept of a middle class squeeze—that's taboo. But that's what Bell, who worked in the Nixon, Reagan, and Kemp presidential campaigns, and Mueller, a former economist for Kemp, did.

The Kemp panel may yet heed their warning. Mueller is to testify before the full commission on

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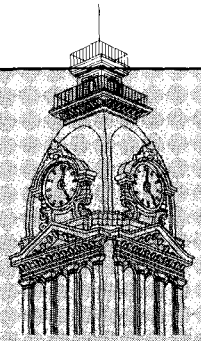

Views From Hillsdale College

For Better or Worse: The Fate of the Family

Today, our nation faces one of its toughest challenges: saving the American family. Consider these recent facts: The rate of illegitimate births in the U.S. grew 54% between 1980 and 1992, reports the National Center for Health Statistics. More than one million divorces occur each year, with over half involving children. The *Journal of the American Medical Association* chronicles the damage physical violence and substance abuse inflict on the health of U.S. teens. Could there be a correlation? The family remains the primary place where children learn about the world, formulate ideas about right and wrong, and mature into adulthood.

A *Wall Street Journal* article argues: "Illegitimacy is the single most important social problem of our time — more important than crime, drugs, poverty, illiteracy, welfare or homelessness because it drives everything else." Given the statistics, the breakdown of the American family is not an isolated domestic problem: It may result in the breakdown of our entire society.

Fortunately, concerned Americans realize that no substitute exists for a mother and father. They know that the best predictor of academic performance, economic success, and personal character is not how much money is spent on schooling but rather how much parental involvement a child receives. No government program, no school administrator, no social worker will do for a child what parents can do best: love, nurture and foster his God-given talents. For better or worse, the fate of the American family rests in the hands of husbands and wives making a commitment to each other and their children.

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September 26, arguing that the flat tax proposals of House Majority Leader Dick Armey and Senator Richard Lugar of Indiana would produce a middle class tax increase. Thus, they "would actually worsen the existing disparity" that forces workers, who earn two-thirds of gross national income, to pay four-fifths of all federal taxes, Mueller wrote recently. And that makes the proposals "exceedingly unattractive in political terms."

This is important. Many Republicans, particularly Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole, want the commission to draft a popular GOP tax reform plan for 1996. If the plan hikes taxes on the middle class, however, Republicans should repudiate it. But what's worse, they might embrace it, leaving themselves vulnerable to Democratic attacks.

Republicans wouldn't be on the verge of putting themselves in this fix if they acknowledged the stagnation in middle class wages. Why don't they? One reason is the middle class squeeze is a staple of Democratic rhetoric. Labor Secretary Robert Reich says over and over: "For a decade and a half, ordinary families have been working harder and getting less." President Clinton makes the same point. And when asked last April about a flat tax, Clinton said studies show Republican proposals "will raise taxes for people with incomes under $200,000 and lower taxes for people over $200,000, like my wife and myself, which would be unfair." Bell says Clinton is correct.

There are two more reasons why conservatives refuse to accept the middle class squeeze. They regard it as an attack on Reaganomics. Indeed, Democrats have used the issue of declining income exactly that way. They're wrong to blame Reaganomics as the culprit, but right to cite the squeeze as a real phenomenon.

Conservatives also see the idea of a squeeze on workers' pay as a challenge to capitalism itself. It's not. It's a problem caused by the tax system. Mueller insists the squeeze stems from the fact the poor pay little in taxes (government benefits aren't taxable) and the rich get tax relief (investment income is taxed at a lower rate). The upshot is the middle class pays more.

A flat tax like Armey's will only make this worse, says Mueller, by making investment income non-taxable. Since middle class Americans have little of this income, they won't benefit. And since the rich and businesses have such income and will benefit, the tax burden will fall more heavily yet on the middle class. To avert this, Bell and Mueller have proposed two versions of a 19 percent flat tax on all gross income above the poverty line.

One would give working families a cut in their combined income and payroll taxes, but the well-to-do and businesses would pay more by losing their lucrative deduction for depreciation on investment property. The other is a worker-friendly variation of Armey, in which the biggest change is to jettison the business deduction on investment property.

Corporate lobbyists will besiege the Capitol if Republicans try to toss out cherished deductions. But the middle class will rejoice. Not so with the Armey plan, on which the Kemp Commission appears to look favorably. Even if the commission endorses Armey, Dole isn't likely to. Bell and Mueller presented their case on September 14 to Dole's advisers. "It's inconceivable that Bob Dole would support a tax increase on any individual," says consultant David Smick, who accompanied Bell and Mueller and is a prominent Dole supporter. Also, the nascent Dole-Kemp friendship would shatter. Dole expects Kemp to come up with a tax plan he can champion. The last thing Dole wants is a plan that tightens the squeeze on the middle class. ♦

Elections

PRESIDENT FORBES?

by Tucker Carlson

AS ADVANCE PUBLICITY GOES, Maureen Dowd's column on Malcolm "Steve" Forbes, Jr., the billionaire magazine publisher who announced for the presidency Sept. 22, wasn't the best the candidate could have hoped for. Writing in the *New York Times* last month, Dowd described the 48-year-old Forbes as "Walter Mitty with a platinum card," a dilettante with a "wacky streak." "Almost everyone seems to agree," wrote Dowd, that Forbes "is loopy for thinking about pouring his own millions into a bid for the Republican nomination."

Dowd's assessment isn't far off. Like tales of the Yeti, Forbes's run for president is pretty easy to dismiss. Then you talk to his supporters, those who've seen the footprints in the snow, and the idea of a Forbes presidency begins to seem somewhat less fanciful.

Unlike the other candidates for the Republican nomination (or at least those who *aren't* dumping an estimated $25 million of their own money into the race), Forbes doesn't plan to take a dime in federal matching funds. The decision allows him to score some potentially juicy rhetorical points ("I'm not going to ask the American people to foot the bill for my campaign," "I believe in this enough to pay for it,"

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etc.). More important, it allows his campaign to avoid restrictive spending caps in the states. While other candidates can spend only $660,000 during primary season in New Hampshire, for example, the Forbes camp can spend as much as it wants.

And, according to Forbes adviser John McLaughlin, the fledgling organization is ready to spend with a vengeance. The other major Republican candidates, says McLaughlin, who has worked for such one-time longshots as Gov. George Allen of Virginia and Mayor Bret Schundler of Jersey City, "have spent hundreds of thousands in Iowa already on organization. Forbes can come in there and can spend three or four times the amount of money they spend."

Part of that money (up to $1 million) will go toward getting on the ballot in New York state, something the Forbes people seem convinced they can accomplish despite the seemingly insuperable obstacles the Al D'Amato machine has placed in the path of everyone but Bob Dole. Most of the rest, of course, will buy advertising. "We're going to use heavy media right up front," explains Bill Dal Col, who has taken leave from running Empower America to manage the Forbes campaign. "And we're going to do it through every media avenue, not only television, but radio, print, direct mail, Internet."

The Forbes media juggernaut, John McLaughlin predicts, will leave the other candidates with a tough decision: "Once Steve starts communicating a message through advertising, what do they do? Do they start spending, or do they try to hold it till later on?"

No matter what they do, the field will be considerably smaller by February. Contenders who don't do well in straw polls and the early primaries are likely to see their sources of funding dry up fast. The Forbes campaign, whose main contributor is committed for the long haul, will be immune from such pressures. "For Forbes, we can hang in there," says McLaughlin. "We can place in the middle of the pack in Iowa and still be alive for New Hampshire, and do better in the next state. People will be dropping out and we'll still be in it. All we have to do is show signs of progress and still be in the race."

By March 12, when half of the delegates will have been picked, the Forbes strategists hope that just about everybody else in the race will be broke and heading home. "We may not see a move in poll numbers till January," predicts John McLaughlin, "but as you go into Super Tuesday, it'll probably be a one-on-one race, probably us and somebody else."

Of course this is all something of a rosy—not to say miraculous—scenario. For one thing, the Forbes campaign, like just about everybody else in the race, is betting above all on a Dole meltdown, which is by no means a sure thing.

But even if a photograph of Dole vacationing on the *Monkey Business* with a 1990s Donna Rice were somehow to appear between now and Super Tuesday, the Forbes campaign would still have to overcome its candidate's relative anonymity. Worse yet, the issue that seems to excite Forbes most—reforming the tax code—has a tendency to put most people to sleep quicker than bourbon and Sominex. "When he talks about lowering interest rates," John McLaughlin concedes, "the way he would do it is not something the average person understands. He wants to communicate his beliefs even though he knows it may not connect with the average person, because he feels it's important."

While there is an undeniable dignity in Forbes's pander-free approach, it's not the sort of stuff that traditionally has brought men to their feet, or set women swooning. The Kingfish never tried to explain capital gains.

Forbes supporters remain undeterred and bright-eyed. "His is the only Kemp-Reagan 'shining city on the hill,' 'America can be a better place' message," points out political consultant Sal Russo.

Ultimately, though, it's neither message nor money that saves the Forbes campaign from seeming utterly preposterous, but recent precedent. "Looked at from inside the Beltway," says Heritage Foundation president Ed Feulner, the notion of Steve Forbes running for president "is wacky and nutty. But then you think that in '92 this weird squeaky little guy who doesn't stand for anything managed to get 19 percent of the vote." ♦

Capitol Hill

DAVID VS. GOLIATH

by Matthew Rees

At 9:30 P.M. on September 20, Newt Gingrich met with Republican Reps. David McIntosh, Ernest Istook, and Robert Ehrlich to discuss their fear that Gingrich might compromise away their measure to curb political advocacy by groups that receive federal money. The issue, dubbed "welfare for lobbyists," is a big one for conservatives, and House freshmen like McIntosh and Ehrlich have made it a test of their clout. Prior to the meeting, Gingrich had sounded squishy.

So McIntosh brought a letter, signed by 60 House

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Republicans, pledging to vote against the bill that will fund the Treasury Department and the U.S. Postal Service unless the measure contains the curb on lobbying by federally-funded organizations. The letter wasn't needed. Gingrich had been persuaded over the previous few days that McIntosh and his colleagues were right. "I'm behind this 100 percent," Gingrich assured them.

The measure faces a fight in the Senate and a possible veto by President Clinton, but Gingrich's commitment means it has a reasonable chance of becoming law. And getting Gingrich was a major victory for McIntosh, who has tirelessly proselytized his colleagues on the issue. McIntosh's energy and smarts (Yale B.A., University of Chicago law school) have impressed Gingrich. "David has shown extraordinary aggressiveness in getting government off our backs and protecting the middle class from Clinton administration red tape," Gingrich has said. He chose McIntosh as one of three freshmen to chair subcommittees, even as the freshman class made McIntosh one of its two liaisons to the leadership. McIntosh was also a main organizer of the Conservative Action Team, a group of House Republican activists who push conservative issues.

McIntosh is lucky to be in Congress. He ran in an Indiana district he'd lived in only briefly, having spent much of his adult life in Washington at the Reagan Justice Department and Bush White House. The favored candidate in the primary failed to file for the seat in time and was disqualified. McIntosh took the primary by 473 votes and easily won the general election.

McIntosh, Istook, and Ehrlich are appalled by the fact that as much as $200 billion in federal money is going each year to non-profit and tax-exempt groups, who then use some of those billions to lobby Congress for more. But the Republicans have purposely refused to frame the issue in terms of "defunding the left," a favored phrase in conservative circles, for fear that would appear too partisan. But cutting off liberal activist groups may be the ultimate effect.

GOP freshman James Longley from Maine felt the power of those groups on Sept. 19, when his Portland office was picketed by the National Council of Senior Citizens.

The Council is a Washington-based interest group that receives 96 percent of its $76 million budget from federal grants and has a political action committee that contributed $171,000 to Congressional candidates last year, all Democrats. "What I take exception to," says Longley, "is the fact that the federal taxpayer is paying for these protests."

If McIntosh, Istook, and Ehrlich succeed, recipients of federal grants would be allowed to use no more than 5 percent of their non-federal funds for political activity. Interest groups claim this would violate the First Amendment and impose an enormous regulatory burden. They also argue that using federal money to lobby for more federal money is already illegal under a 1984 federal regulation. That's true, but the regulation doesn't address the key point: Money is fungible. If a group has $1,000 and the federal government gives it an additional $5,000, this frees the original thou' for activities that would otherwise have been impossible. Activities like political advocacy.

If federal grantees, ranging from the AFL-CIO ($1.3 million last year) to the League of Women Voters ($1 million), succeed in defeating the ban, they will owe thanks to two moderate Senate Republicans on the Appropriations Committee: James Jeffords and Mark Hatfield. Jeffords won't let Republicans attach a rider incorporating McIntosh's bill to the Treasury-Postal appropriation. It's "too restrictive," Jeffords says. Appropriations Chairman Hatfield is even less enthusiastic about the defunding.

At the end of August, Gingrich was shaken by an Al Hunt column in the *Wall Street Journal* that called the McIntosh bill "recklessly drafted" and "a fraud." The bill had cleared the House 232 to 187, but Gingrich was hesitant about insisting the Senate go along. Later, however, he read a copy of congressional testimony given back in July by his confidante Arianna Huffington, who described in detail how charities are corrupted by political advocacy, and he got back with the program.

Meanwhile, McIntosh and Co. had been maneuvering to stiffen Gingrich's resolve. They got Gingrich's three key deputies—Majority Leader Dick Armey, Whip Tom DeLay, and Republican Conference Chairman John Boehner—to offer a strong endorsement of the bill at a meeting of House leaders on Sept. 19. During that session, McIntosh noted that some federally-funded groups are opposing Medicare reform, Gingrich's pet issue. Gingrich's desire to compromise evaporated. The next night, he gave McIntosh his firm commitment.

The battle over "welfare for lobbyists" is creating a major domestic problem for Senate Majority Leader Bob Dole—pun intended. His wife Elizabeth, president of the American Red Cross, wrote GOP Sen. Richard Shelby of Alabama to say the McIntosh measure would hamper Red Cross disaster relief efforts. That's a farfetched interpretation, but so far Dole has been unable to change his wife's mind. Maybe McIntosh should lobby her, too. ♦

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Playing Trains

by Joanne Sadler

Both Republicans and Democrats are predicting the federal government will undergo a "train wreck" this fall—a temporary widespread shutdown due to a lack of funding. Once President Clinton and the Republican Congress come to terms on the budget, the "wreck" will be over, and the bureaucrats will return to work. But what about the "wreck" itself? What will happen when Federal employees (like myself) stay away from their jobs because they're not being paid?

Labor union and Clinton administration officials decry the oncoming "wreck" because, they say, "it will ruin people's lives." Perhaps this is a desperate attempt to deflect attention from the obvious benefit of the "wreck": a federal bureaucracy on Slim Fast, reduced to only "essential personnel."

The reality is that many federal employees plan to make the most of their time off, paycheck or no paycheck. We've had a couple of months to get ready financially. And if the "wreck" lasts only a day or two (highly probable) there's a good chance we'll get paid anyway, via "administrative leave." Even if the "wreck" proves a long one, we could collect unemployment insurance. My peers and friends, therefore, aren't worried or angry, but are calmly making plans to take advantage of their free time.

What will we bureaucrats be doing during the "train wreck"? Some will do what you might expect: finish odd jobs around the house and spend more time with their kids. One friend of mine is going to Disney World, another is going to Florida to play golf with her sister, while another plans to cruise the Potomac with his wife (who's also a federal employee) on their powerboat.

Others will head out to their vacation homes or go on Christmas shopping trips, while the more industrious types will get caught up on their night-school homework or spend more time at their second jobs. Still others plan to "ruin their lives" by getting married during the "wreck," or by going hunting (October is squirrel-hunting season in nearby Pennsylvania).

For most of us bureaucrats, it's no big deal. We've learned how to play the game from the mini-wreck of 1986 (we had four hours off, but received administrative leave pay later) and the near-wreck in 1990. We know how to plan for shutdowns. As a friend advised, "Stay away from the fur shops and the racetrack and everything will be just fine."

Joanne Sadler is a federal employee and a law student at George Mason University.

First to Go?: Sources tell The Weekly Standard that Massachusetts Gov. William Weld will announce in the next two weeks a race against Sen. John Kerry in 1996. As a result, Weld will say, he's resigning his duties as finance chairman of the Pete Wilson for President campaign. This new nail in Wilson's coffin follows the resignation of his political guru, George Gorton, last week after an internal power struggle amid wide speculation that Wilson's third-quarter fundraising will show his campaign with a debt of $950,000. Wilson may quickly withdraw from the presidential contest, just barely ahead of his fellow Californian, Rep. Robert Dornan, who'll announce that he chooses instead to run for reelection to Congress. On the other hand, it's possible Wilson will find it necessary to stay in the race until January, when he qualifies for matching funds—funds he can use to help cope with his debt.

♦

Post-Cold-War Commie Update: Hundreds of Russians demonstrated outside the U.S. embassy in Moscow last week in protest of NATO actions in the former Yugoslavia. Soviet flags were unfurled, and placards hoisted that read "We will bury you, America"—a touching echo of Nikita Krushchev's most famous utterance.

Meanwhile, the people of Hong Kong participated last week in what is likely to prove their last free election and voted overwhelmingly for pro-democracy candidates. Only an hour after the polls opened, the People's Republic of China announced its intention to dissolve the legislature when it takes over control of the British colony in 1997—a fresh reminder in these post-Cold War days of what a communist regime is really like.

And proving that even after the Cold War an American president can still kowtow to Communists, the Dalai Lama was granted a measly half hour with Vice President Gore in the White House. The meeting was punctuated by a ten-minute cameo appearance by President Clinton in the vice-presidential office. The president declined to receive the Dalai Lama on his own turf, the Oval Office, so as not to antagonize Tibet's tormentors in Beijing.

♦

Calling Adam Bellow at the Free Press: Read the Explosive New Conservative Affirmation by one of the most controversial thinkers of our time! No writer is as bold! Makes P.J. O'Rourke look like a weenie! Here are six excerpts from a recent *Washington Post* piece that will blow your socks off:

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Scrapbook

• "The leftist is antagonistic to the concept of competition because, deep inside, he feels like a loser."

• "Notice the masochistic tendency of leftist tactics. Leftists protest by lying down in front of vehicles."

• "Self-hatred is a leftist trait."

• "One of the most widespread manifestations of the craziness of our world is leftism, so a discussion of the psychology of leftism can serve as an introduction to the discussion of the problems of modern society in general."

• "If our society had no social problems at all, the leftists would have to INVENT problems in order to provide themselves with an excuse for making a fuss."

• "The majority of people engage in a significant amount of naughty behavior."

You don't often see sentiments like this expressed in the *Post*, so perhaps it's not surprising that the author of the aforesaid nuggets is the Unabomber.

♦

THE READING LIST: As Donnie Graham and Pinch Sulzberger congratulate themselves for their decision to accommodate a murderer, here are two great novels they might consider reading if they actually want to understand the mind of a psychotic revolutionary:

The Princess Cassamassima, by Henry James. Young Hyacinth Robinson falls in with Victorian anarcho-syndicalists and discovers the totalitarian mind 75 years before Hannah Arendt coined the term "totalitarian."

The Secret Agent, by Joseph Conrad. A terrorist in London succeeds only in killing the retarded brother of his foolish wife.

♦

CONTINUATION OF A CLICHE: At long last, with Jerry Garcia gone, the book is now shut on the Sixties—or so it's been said in no fewer than 54 news stories describing his passing as the "end of an era."

This very same era has ended before—many times. The *New York Times* deemed it over when Abbie Hoffman failed to beat a drug rap in 1981, and Bill Graham's expiration prompted the *Houston Chronicle* headline: "Rock Promoter's Death Marks End of An Era."

CNN's Judy Woodruff christened one-time Yippie Jerry Rubin's jaywalking demise "the end of an era," with co-anchor Bernie Shaw concurring "It sure is." The *Chicago Tribune*, whose Garcia headline claimed "Rock Icon's Death Marks End of Era," decided back in 1989 that "Twenty Years Ago, Altamont marked the End of an Era." Similar Endisms centered around John Lennon, Jackie O, Woodstock and, if the *Buffalo News* is to be believed, Woodstock '94, which "marks the end of one era and the beginning of another."

Now, with Timothy Leary suffering from prostate cancer and waiting to hear the heavenly choir ("This is wonderful," he's said), one can't help but anticipate a new dawn in the never-ending end of an era.

♦

BANNING D'SOUZA: Last week was Banned Book Week in Washington, whose ostensible purpose is to celebrate freedom of speech. So why, at Borders Books downtown, could Dinesh D'Souza's *The End of Racism* not be found? When a clerk was asked to locate it, he replied, "Yeah, we have it. It's under Nonsense."

After enjoying his own quip, he sent the buyer to Ethnic Studies and then to New Releases. No luck. "I know we got it in the other day," the clerk said. The next day, four other clerks failed to locate the controversial book, which has a first printing of 75,000. Banned Book Week, indeed.

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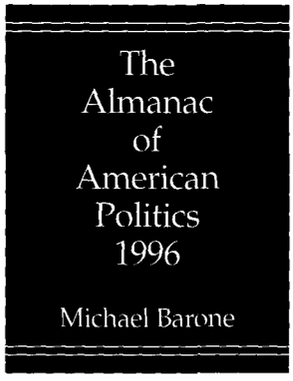

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National Journal

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The Worst Boss on Capitol Hill

By Matt Labash

Surely there are worse gigs to be had, like maybe working the circular saw as a back-up killer in a Delta poultry plant or stabbing trash in a fluorescent dickey next to I-40 in Amarillo. But on Capitol Hill, one would be hard-pressed to suffer any indignity worse than that of working for Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins of Detroit.

Just ask Tony Martin, who survived both his job and his dismissal: "I would come to the front gate at National Airport, particularly if she hadn't been able to fly first class, and I would meet her with her coffee, croissant, and slippers." She would then bend at the knee while he slid off her shoes. Explains Martin: "I had to put on her slippers."

On Capitol Hill, member/staffer relations are often similar to those between a feudal lord and his vassal, and the way members treat the vassals who serve at their pleasure is often suggestive of the way they conduct their legislative duties. But Collins takes the feudal aspect of her position to Stygian depths. Her office is a case study in the abuse of power and the ways in which elected officials without a sense of limits can run roughshod. Collins's frequent transgressions may help explain the desperate and growing unhappiness in the United States with the nation's legislative class.

It's not that Collins grew up surrounded by such perks as a manservant to don and doff her footwear. But since her 1990 election, she has become accustomed to a certain snap-to. She represents Detroit's 15th district, a crime-ridden, dilapidated asphalt boneyard that ranks as the nation's fourth poorest. She has coasted to victory in all three of her general elections by 80 percent or more, due in part to a district that's so rabidly Democrat, even Michael Dukakis outpointed Bush by a 4-to-1 margin.

They tend to love her in spite of the scandals, and there have been a few. In 1989, her son was arrested for robbing a tennis shop with a sawed-off shotgun. While still a councilwoman in 1990, Collins, a college dropout, was laid open in the thick of campaign season for falsely claiming she was a member of Mensa. "If I wasn't a member, then I was misled," she was quoted as saying. "I should never have been invited to the meetings." Shortly after her election victory, she admitted taking out a $75,000 campaign loan with three co-signers, a gross violation of Federal Election Commission limits.

According to a spate of investigative stories this summer in publications ranging from *The Hill* to the *Detroit Free Press*, Collins continues to skate along the edge. She regularly uses Congressional staff for campaign work, a big no-no. She often raids campaign coffers for suspect expenditures, like $2,000 to her brother to "purchase shirts and hats." She pads her vouchers, such as the $8,500 she claims she spent in New York City's Delta Fashions on "clocks" when Delta said her invoice was only for $948. She was the 1991 Congressional leader in franked mail with a $164,872 tab—$22,000 over her mailing allowance. And when she's not franking, she's having staffers secure some of the 23,000 first-class postage stamps she's bought since taking office, which they claim are often used for campaign mailings. That is a violation of House and Federal Election Commission rules. A variety of allegations are now under scrutiny by both the House Ethics Committee and the Justice Department.

Recently, the Office of Fair Employment Practices granted former press secretary Bruce Taylor over $20,000 in back pay and legal fees after Collins and her chief of staff, Meredith Cooper, allegedly fired him in December because they suspected he was HIV-positive. The sacking occurred two days after his lover died of AIDS.

"Bruce wasn't fired," Cooper told me. "He just wasn't reappointed to the 104th Congress. . . . It had nothing to do with who he was sleeping with. Nobody knew that his lover was white until after the fact. It was not an issue."

I hadn't asked about the color of his lover's skin, but no matter—the ruling was the first time a member

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of Congress has ever lost in such a hearing.

The Taylor episode is indicative of the hijinks inside Cannon 401, Collins's private domain. Turnover in her office has reached an annual clip of 100-plus percent. As the *Detroit News* reported, "the average Capitol Hill staffer works in one congressional office 3.6 years. The typical stay in Rep. Barbara-Rose Collins's office is closer to a few months."

In the aftermath of the fair-employment decision, Bruce Taylor has become something of a folk hero to disgruntled former staffers, who never smile when they refer to Collins's office as "the last plantation." "Barbara-Rose Collins has asked a lot of people to bend over, and everybody just did it," says one. "Bruce was the first one to say, 'No, I think we're gonna have a little talk here.'" Singing is more like it.

Canvassing 28 former staffers, some of whom sat for multiple interviews, produces remarkably consistent accounts. "There was an atmosphere of misery and terror, divisiveness and distrust," says one. "Barbara really treats us like garbage," says another. "It was a mess, everybody was scared to death—if you breathed wrong you had the chance to be fired," offers one of the deposed. Another, who left voluntarily, tells the following anecdote: "One staffer walked me out on my first day and warned me, 'Get out, be afraid, be very afraid, it's a horrible place to be.' They fired her shortly thereafter."

Many of Collins's unusual demands center around culinary themes. "She loves to eat," says Bruce Taylor, who recalled bringing in barbecued ribs and potato salad for a pregnant co-worker. "When Collins saw her eating what I'd brought in, she buzzed me at my desk and asked me to come into her office and screamed at me because I didn't bring her any lunch. She said, 'You know you can't bring any food in this office and share it with someone else without sharing it with me first.' I tried to laugh it off, but she was totally serious. She said, 'I know you have some leftovers, why don't you bring them?' I actually didn't, but I went home that night and made some just to get her off my back." The co-worker corroborates his account.

According to former aides, Collins could not be stopped while in the throes of a barbecue jones. One staffer tells of a Texas delegation hoe-down in the Longworth Building during the summer of 1993. "We were instructed to go there and get a couple plates for the congresswoman," says the staffer, who is black. "It's pretty humiliating, as you can imagine—we were already integrating the reception anyway because the Hill is a very white place. It was like, 'here we come with to-go boxes so we could bring her back barbecue fried chicken, mashed potatoes, and peas.' And if you were on the payroll, you best not come back empty-handed."

Collins also prized her desserts with a fervor bordering on mania, according to two former staffers who independently recount the tale of an April fundraiser at the Loews L'Enfant Plaza Hotel in Washington. "She had had it catered and there was a sweet potato pie left over, and one of the staffers forgot to take it with them," says a former aide.

"She screamed at her AA," says Tony Martin, who says he was fired for faxing home a copy of an article about Taylor's firing, "and said, 'Go get my m—f—'n pie'—and the AA had to call and retrieve it. She said she paid for that pie and it was hers and she wanted it."

Numerous ex-staffers recall a former aide having to reimburse Collins after buying her the wrong kind of sandwich. Four former staffers say the same aide's job was threatened if she failed to book Collins on first-class flights. "The congresswoman would miss votes if she couldn't fly first class," says Taylor.

Says another former senior staffer: "She had her administrative assistant go to the grocery store for her. When the AA called her from the store to ask her about something, she said, 'You know what, I have some more coupons here, why don't you come back and get them?'"

At no point, according to former aides, did Collins seem conscious that she might be pushing staffers beyond the bounds of professional responsibility—or if she was, she was blissfully unconcerned. "A lot of members are abusive because of the power they hold," says Bianka Marie LeBeouf, another former press secretary, who says she left willingly. "But in her case . . . she has no grasp of the line between personal and professional relationships. Therefore, if you work for her and she thinks she has a relationship with you, you should do her laundry and pick up her dog and do these things because you are like a friend of hers. It doesn't matter if you try to explain how it's not proper—and I have had numerous conversations with her about this stuff—she is not able to disassociate the personal from the professional."

Nor would she listen to reason. "If you said you were not into it, you'd be gone, period," says LeBeouf. "We would hire and fire people every two weeks. It was ridiculous."

Collins's sense of entitlement often takes on surreal manifestations. Says one former black staffer, in an ac-

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count corroborated by two others: "She likes her coffee her skin color"—which the staffer describes as "medium cocoa." "If it's dark, that means it's not sweet enough—pour it out and start again. If it's too light, there's too much cream, pour it out and start again. She wants it her exact skin color, and puts her hand up to the coffee to make sure." The staffer says on one occasion, after three consecutive cups of unsatisfactory coffee, Collins finally told her, "Just disregard it and get me some tea."

From the lowliest aide right up to the chief of staff, various employees were required to gas up the car, get it washed, clean her apartment, pack for her trips, fetch her spongy toe prongs while she was undergoing a pedicure in the House beauty shop, and shoot out to the malls when she thought it time to shop the sales.

Barbara-Rose Collins

Kent Lemon

Though Collins may quite possibly be the most pampered member of Congress, no degree of displayed fealty on the part of staffers would guarantee protection from her outright menacing mood swings, oftentimes over the smallest infractions.

Lebeouf says that during her first few weeks with Collins, when her office was still located in the Longworth Building, she mistakenly used the congresswoman's private bathroom, located just outside the member's office. LeBeouf says that after exiting the bathroom and bumping into Collins, the member inquired, "Why are you using my bathroom?" After LeBeouf apologized profusely, claiming ignorance, she says Collins replied, "No, you can't use it, it's my bathroom and nobody is allowed to use it," at which time she turned to her former chief of staff and said, according to LeBeouf and another witness, "You get someone in here to clean up this bathroom, I could catch anything from her, I don't know who she's doing."

"She reprimanded me like I had done it on the floor," says LeBeouf.

The same chief of staff, Miniard Culpepper, was made to wash the congresswoman's dishes because she thought he was a chauvinist, according to Bruce Taylor and another staffer. Another former aide once heard the congresswoman page Culpepper in front of constituents by saying, "Miniard, get your black ass in here." Culpepper, now with the New England Department of Housing and Urban Development, declined comment. So, too, has Collins, who did not return calls after many interview requests were made through her office.

Meredith Cooper, her chief of staff, did talk. Cooper has worked for Collins since 1975, when she was Collins's secretary in the Michigan state legislature. Cooper is by all accounts responsible for hirings and most firings, making her one of the most loathed women in Congress, according to ex-staffers.

Cooper and the since-departed Culpepper are both credited with one of the more irksome practices in the office: Collins's Christmas and birthday gift shakedowns. Seven ex-staffers, some of whom had no overlap, say that over the course of a few years, whenever the blessed events took place, Collins would make her wish lists known to the respective chiefs of staff, who would then solicit donations from the peons. "We were intimidated to give gifts," says Taylor, who was asked by Culpepper to cough up $25 within a few weeks of starting his job. "Meredith said that in a previous year, most staffers who didn't give her a Christmas or birthday gift had been fired or didn't get a Christmas bonus."

Cooper takes issue with the story. "I can't speak for Miniard on the gifts. Ms. Collins's birthday is common knowledge for the staff, so if they want to share in that celebration, they're free to do so. But the cup was not passed . . . I don't think any of the gifts cost more than five dollars."

Not according to the ex-staffers, who said they were asked to give around $20 apiece, and who claim

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that Collins's Yuletide/birthday collection now includes a Nordic track, an Afrocentric Christmas angel for the top of her tree, and expensive hand-carved chess pieces in the shape of stringed instruments that one staffer thinks cost as much as $400.

Voters will allow their legislators some decadence here or there if that misbehavior is offset by political savvy. But Collins, after five years of toil in the backbencher hinterlands, has precious little to show for her staffers' troubles, even after chairing the now defunct Postal Operations and Services subcommittee.

One of her former legislative staffers diagnoses the problem: "She was wholly unqualified and not the smartest person I ever worked with. When we'd do committee work, every word that she would utter at the meeting, or the markup, or whatever was going on, had to be scripted. Most politicians have an independent streak and like to ad lib and do their own thing. With her, there would be no independent thought taking place." Another former senior staffer adds: "Everything was scripted, and she never strayed from it."

Cooper defends her boss: "She's a hell of a legislator, she's very astute about legislative initiatives, she knows how to write bills." The *Detroit Free Press* offers a different take: "In five years, Collins has introduced 24 bills, many of them designating commemorative holidays; only one bill has passed." That crucial piece of legislation was to rename the federal courthouse in Detroit after former U.S. District Judge Theodore Levin.

As for Collins's political acumen? A former staffer says she once began a meeting with General Accounting Office officials by asking, "What does GAO stand for?" "There was a big pause and disbelief," the aide says. "It was a real show-stopper."

Cooper denies most of the aforementioned accusations, while making interesting concessions here and there.

"So what if the turnover [is 100 percent]? I'd rather have the turnover than have people stay and be unproductive." And: "How can you accidentally go in a member's bathroom, give me a break?" And: "We need to focus on why a black youngster can't grow up to say I want to be president of the United States—not on disgruntled staffers saying that I asked them to put potpourri in the member's bathroom. Although it's probably a good idea."

After questions about racial slurs Collins's black staffers attribute to their former boss, Cooper goes nuclear: "I'm just going to lay it out for you. I know the media's racist. It's racist pure and simple. Reporters could be the next Dan Rather or Lesley Stahl if you did something on why racism has held this country back."

Cooper's answer mimics Collins's own recent response to the *Detroit News* about her habit of blaming personnel problems in her office on racism when most of the criticism has come from other blacks: "Racists have always been able to find Uncle Toms."

It's a bit ironic that Collins (one of the most liberal members of Congress, with a 100 percent ADA ranking for two years running) attributes what's ailing her to racism, when six former staffers I spoke with, five of whom are black, say racist remarks were made to black staffers by Collins and Cooper on numerous occasions.

Says one former senior staffer, who is black: "On three occasions, two by the chief of staff and one by the member, they had said very openly that if they had an all-white staff, they wouldn't have the problems they're having in the office. It's an extremely racist, reprehensible remark and if she was a white member, she would have been hung from the highest yardarm on the Capitol grounds."

Says Bruce Taylor: "Meredith once said, 'We are going to fire all you niggers and hire an entire white staff.' She actually said the word."

Retorts Cooper: "I think they're fabricating the Mark Fuhrman tapes. I don't use that word."

Another former junior staffer, also black, claims she heard Collins say, "'White people on Capitol Hill are known for working hard and being dedicated to their work, while black people are lazy.' She said she was going to hire white people to boost office morale," the staffer adds.

What's to become of Barbara-Rose Collins? Bruce Taylor claims to be psychic and had a chance to ply his trade with Collins before his ugly demise. "We would spend hours in her office," Taylor says. "She would have me read her palms and do psychic readings. I didn't want to do it—you're uncomfortable because you see things that you don't want to see about your boss—although I didn't see my firing, so I don't know how good I am." Two other former staffers that worked with Taylor corroborate the palm-readings.

When asked what he gathered before being canned, Taylor says, "She's in her twelfth house, which means she's primed for a big fall, and there's nothing you can do when you're primed for a big fall because of karma. She's got to pay her debt for what she's done in previous lifetimes."

Or maybe just for this one. ♦

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Bill Clinton's Pathetic Lies

By Carl M. Cannon

Even for a politician, the story Bill Clinton spun this spring when he visited Des Moines to shore up support in the Farm Belt was a lulu. "I am the only president," he said, "who knew something about agriculture when I got there."

It was an odd assertion from a man who has never really held a private sector job, let alone worked with his hands. And it was all the more brazen because numerous presidents grew up on farms, or in farm communities, or farmed themselves as adults.

"It was so very bizarre," mused Sonja Hillgren, editor of *Farm Journal* magazine. "I mean, 'Hello! Ever heard of George Washington?' The Department of Agriculture was his idea."

William Bramhall

Washington was the first breeder of mules in America. Thomas Jefferson's writings on grape growing are still consulted by Virginia vintners. Herbert Hoover, orphaned at age 9, grew up on his two uncles' farms, where he picked potato bugs—a penny for every 100—and later weeded onions at 50 cents a day. As head of the U.S. Food Administration, Hoover probably knew more about agricultural prices, production, and distribution than anyone on either side of the Atlantic.

Then there was Jimmy Carter, whom Clinton knows personally. Carter resigned his commission in the Navy to save his family's farm and peanut warehouse business. And Harry Truman, whom the current president professes to revere, worked his father's 600-acre Missouri farm in 1906, rising at 5 a.m. to plow, milk cows, hoe corn and potatoes, cut wood, and feed hogs. It's all there in David McCullough's *Truman*, a book the president claims to have read.

Perhaps I've belabored this point. After all, whom did Bill Clinton hurt with his little farm fable? But like most of those who cover the White House full-time, I've grown troubled by Clinton's casual approach to the truth. If the farm crack were an isolated example, it would just be funny, like the time Clinton claimed to have grown up in a national park or, perhaps thinking he was Bill Bradley, appeared to be claiming a career in professional basketball. "If I could shoot like that," he said referring to Iowa State star Fred Hoilberg, "I would still be in the NBA."

But Clinton's performance in Iowa is part of a disquieting pattern. This president salts his remarks with so many inventions, half-truths, and self-serving exaggerations that reporters who cover him often have to choose between truth-squadding every speech or ignoring his fibs.

Reporters don't want to become accomplices in presidential prevarication, but typically his fibs contain just enough truth that it's easier not to fool with them. In October 1994, for instance, Clinton began spicing his stump speech with the claim he had opened up Japanese markets to American-grown rice. This was about half-true. The real reason the Japanese suddenly dropped their barriers to foreign rice was a disastrous crop failure in Japan that led the government to take rare emergency measures (as they'd done when importing American rice in the 1950s). At the same time, U.S. Trade Representative Mickey Kantor was still negotiating into the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade a provision guaranteeing that 4 percent of the Japanese rice market would come from abroad.

Thus, Vice President Al Gore got it right last November when he tried to drum up support in Congress for GATT by saying: "With GATT, American farmers will sell rice for the first time to Japan and Korea on a regular basis."

But Clinton's claim a month before in a speech at a Michigan Ford plant was, at best, misleading. "We're

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selling all kinds of things we never sold before, not just automobiles, we're selling rice to Japan for the first time, something I am very proud of," he said. GATT had not been approved then, and the non-emergency exports weren't to begin for another year. In fact, they haven't yet begun.

Last June, Clinton went to Chicago's 15th police precinct for a campaign-style speech calling for outlawing bullets that pierce protective vests. His speech contained some evocative language and salient points. "I have never seen a deer, a duck, or a wild turkey wearing Kevlar," he said. But it also contained a number of misleading assertions and insinuations.

For example: A local police officer mentioned by Clinton was indeed killed with a handgun while wearing a Kevlar vest, but not because he was struck with an armor-piercing bullet—they haven't yet been marketed. The bullet penetrated his torso after traveling up his sleeve.

In July, the president launched into a finger-pointing, fist-pounding Rose Garden tirade against the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Commission for its supposedly capricious judgment in closing bases in electoral vote-rich California.

"Let's look at the facts here," the president fumed. "This base-closing commission made far more changes . . . than any of the three previous base-closing plans."

William Bramhall

These were not the facts. "Nobody here disputes California is taking a hit in this round," base-closing commission spokesman Wade Nelson told me. "Beyond that, everything else he said is inaccurate."

This commission added only nine bases to the hit list recommended by the Pentagon. The previous commission had added 18. The president also said the job losses at McClellan Air Force Base would devastate the California economy. Stephen Levy, director of the Center for Continuing Study of the California Economy, says that not only could California's 30 million people easily absorb the job losses at McClellan, but so could the city of Sacramento alone.

Bill Clinton is hardly the first president to tell a tale. Ronald Reagan cheerfully fed the public all kinds of false information he'd committed to memory. One Reagan fish tale was the claim that segregation in the U.S. armed forces ended when a black steward at Pearl Harbor grabbed a machine gun and blazed away at attacking Japanese planes. My own favorite was his claim that Mount St. Helens caused more pollution than all the cars in the world caused in the preceding 10 years.

There are many ways politicians butcher the truth. They fib about personal indiscretions, dissemble about broken campaign promises, and grossly exaggerate their accomplishments. There are deceptions in staff-written speeches, simple slips of the tongue, falsities based on historical ignorance, Reaganesque flights of fancy, and, finally, they willful shadings of the truth for partisan advantage.

Bill Clinton has tried them all, while sometimes asserting piously that "it's time to tell the truth."

Prefacing his remarks with that exact phrase, Clinton challenged Republicans during the 1993 budget battles to get specific. "The difference between us and the other side," he said, "is that we asked them for their spending cuts and we're still waiting."

This was news to Rep. John Kasich of the budget committee. Kasich had submitted to the White House a line-by-line Republican counterproposal identifying $430 billion in spending cuts—and received a signed letter from Clinton thanking him for his input.

Less than a month later, at the annual White House correspondents' dinner, Clinton also needled Bob Dole, who was then bottling up Clinton's "stimulus" package, by asserting that Dole had written a letter asking for $23 million in federal funds to convert a Kansas senior center to a boathouse. Actually, the amount of dollars Dole requested for the project was zero.

Speaking in California in 1993, Clinton said, "We celebrated the Bicentennial of the Constitution in 1987, right? Guess what? There's still a Constitutional Commission [that] you're paying for." In truth, the commission had closed its doors on schedule, even returning $1.6 million to the Treasury.

Then-communications director George Stephanopoulos, acknowledging that mistake, said the president had been "ill-staffed." White House aides used the same explanation for a speech last March in which Clinton related some dubious statistics on violence against women. He said a violent crime is committed against a woman in this country every 12 seconds. Press secretary Mike McCurry retracted that before the day was up. Also, the president claimed that up to 4 million American wives are the victims of domestic violence each year, a number that statistician David

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Murray told Ann Devroy of the *Washington Post* is probably "five times too high."

Aides let it be known that Clinton had read a staff-written speech verbatim, but sometimes it is Clinton who sandbags his aides. Before the attack on Dole, the president asked Stephanopoulos to check the senior-center story out for him, but when the communications director reported back that he couldn't verify it, the president made the remarks anyway.

This willingness to wing it—or to say what is expedient—is one reason Clinton made it to the White House. In 1990, while running for governor of Arkansas, his pollsters told him there was one issue that could hurt him: voters' fears that he wanted to run for president. So he pledged: "If I am elected governor, I will not seek the presidency of the United States."

During that 1992 campaign, as questions about Clinton's past arose that ranged from Whitewater to his draft record, Clinton's modus operandi was to furnish incomplete or inaccurate responses in the apparent hope that the truth would never quite catch up.

The crowning example came during the third presidential debate. UPI's Helen Thomas, noting that Clinton's credibility had been damaged because of his ever-changing explanations of his draft record, asked him: "If you had to do it over again, would you put on the nation's uniform?"

"If I had to do it over again, I might answer the questions a little better," Clinton replied. "You know, I'd been in public life a long time, and no one had ever questioned my role."

Attentive Arkansans recognized this for the lie it was. Questions about his draft record had been raised in every gubernatorial campaign Clinton ran in Arkansas, especially the first one in 1978, when Billy G. Geren, a retired Air Force lieutenant colonel, held a press conference to denounce Clinton as a draft dodger. Geren outlined all of the essential allegations that would surface in 1992.

Michael Josephson, founder of an institute in California devoted to the study of ethics, terms falsehoods like this "quick lies," and says they are an unfortunate part of everyday life in modern America. "As an ethicist, I hate all lies . . . and I'm not thrilled about conflicts of interest back in Arkansas, either," he told me. "But as a practical matter it depends what they're lying about." Josephson said he is more troubled by implausible statements made by both President Reagan and President Bush over the Iran-contra scandal. "We need to keep perspective on what's important."

He raises an important point, and I will return to it. But regarding Whitewater, it has become clear that the dissembling went beyond just kissing off reporters' questions with a fib or two. When confronted with the March 8, 1992, *New York Times* exclusive on Whitewater, Clinton and his wife offered an initial defense that consisted of three main themes:

- They were "passive" investors totally oblivious of the workings of Whitewater Development Corp.
- They pumped $68,900 into the deal and lost it all.
- There was no overlap with Clinton's official capacities; nor did Hillary Clinton do business with regulators appointed by her husband.

None of these assertions was accurate, but by the time the truth came to light, Clinton was in office, and his explanation had evolved. He'd answered all the questions, he said; it's old stuff, and the only ones pushing it are political enemies.

More recently, Clinton hasn't even been taking Whitewater questions, emphasizing instead that he's cooperating more fully with investigators "than any president in history." Such hyperbole is a familiar Clinton construct. His "reinventing government" is the most massive overhaul of the government in history, his economic plan cut the deficit by anywhere from $500 billion to $1 trillion, the largest ever, and so forth. These claims are untrue as well.

Clinton has a taste for categorical statements: He has claimed that no other president had the regard for the First Amendment that he does, that no occupant of the White House has gotten press as bad as his, and even, during a September trip to California, that he has eaten more raisins "than any president who ever held this office."

I'm not making that up.

On the same trip and on a more serious note, the president also made untrue assertions about weighty domestic policy issues. He took credit for curbing Federal affirmative-action programs: "I've already abolished one I thought was excessive," he told one audience. He was referring to an FCC regulation that gave tax breaks to media corporations that sold outlets to minorities, a program killed by Republicans over the objections of Clinton and his aides. The White House had argued it should be modified, but not abolished.

The day before, Clinton told students at Abraham Lincoln Middle School in Selma, CA: "Right after I became president, I was told by Republican leaders in the Congress that they would not vote for my budget, none of them would vote for it, no matter what I did to it—that they wanted a partisan issue, and that if I tried

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to bring the deficit down, if it didn't work, they would blame me, and it if did, they would say, well, I raised taxes in '93 to bring down the deficit."

Obviously, no Republican ever spoke such words to the president. A number of them, notably Sen. Pete Domenici of New Mexico, were eager to make a deal with Clinton. Before the speech, Clinton had often said he *guessed* the Republicans were using this strategy. That day, he charged they'd actually told him so.

In mid-September, he went even further: "For two years, I said the Medicare trust fund was in trouble and Mr. Gingrich and others mocked me and denied that it was in trouble." This is very nearly the opposite of the truth: Gingrich, trying to taunt the administration into presenting its own plan for controlling Medicare spending, has been reminding people that Clinton's own Medicare commission warned of impending disaster. The president appears to have been referring here to his health care package in 1994, and the GOP denial of a health care "crisis."

As a candidate, Clinton promised to cut middle-class taxes, submit a plan to balance the budget in five years, add 100,000 cops to the streets, and ensure that all Americans who wanted to repay college loans with public service could do so. As president, he didn't submit budgets that would accomplish all of this. He actually raised taxes on middle-income Americans in the form of a gasoline tax increase. When asked why, he and his advisers always cited the same factor: the larger-than-expected deficits bequeathed to him by Bush and Congress.

William Bramhall

But this was a crock. Yes, in January 1993, during the transition, the Congressional Budget Office abruptly raised its estimate of the annual deficit from the mid-$250 billion range to more than $300 billion for years to come. But this was entirely expected. In fact, the previous August, Clinton complained publicly that he thought Bush's budget office was downplaying the deficit and that it would actually be in the range of $400 billion. Yet he never revised any of his promises.

On top of all that, in the early spring of 1993, the Congressional Budget Office revised the numbers again—this time downward—attributing the move to lower interest rates and to the recovery that began when George Bush was president. The Clinton economic team not only didn't cut middle-class taxes at that moment, but said interest rates had declined because the markets and the banks were encouraged by the administration's economic plan. The plan had not yet become law.

In the end, White House posturing on the budget—and so many of these other exaggerations—seems to go far beyond the "quick lies" that Michael Josephson talks about. But there is something instructive in the example Josephson chose to illustrate his point that not all lies are of equal weight: Iran-contra. Iran-contra is a foreign policy issue. It seems on its face to be of more significance to the nation that Reagan said he wasn't trading arms for hostages—when he was—than for Clinton to fudge the facts of a long-ago land deal in Arkansas. Yet historians generally give presidents something approaching a dispensation to lie about national security matters (a subject Clinton doesn't lie about, as far as I know).

The theory is that a president may believe the good of the country is at stake in foreign policy, but that self-serving lies about inconsequential matters are more a sign of faulty character. Just whose interest was Clinton serving, for instance, when he blurted out at a press conference—with no apparent basis—that the Justice Department feared for children inside the Branch Davidian compound in Waco because those as young as 3 had been taught how "to kill themselves"?

Who was helped on July 19, 1993, when he visited Fort McNair to discuss his "don't ask, don't tell" compromise on gays in the military and used a handy bit of revisionism? Clinton explained that he had stumbled onto this issue only when asked about it by a Harvard student in a speech he gave there on October 30, 1991.

"The question had never been presented to me and I never had the opportunity to discuss it with anyone," he said. On the contrary, just weeks before the Harvard speech, he'd met with gay activists, including Rep. Barney Frank, and this issue had been raised. Seeking the support of the gays, Clinton expressed opposition to the gay ban, and received supportive, front-page coverage in the gay press.

"He who permits himself to tell a lie once, finds it much easier to do it a second and third time, till at length it becomes habitual," Thomas Jefferson once

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wrote. "He tells lies without attending to it, and truths without the world's believing him. This falsehood of the tongue leads to that of the heart, and in time, depraves all its good dispositions."

Bill Clinton's critics might find this an apt description of the current president. My own fear is that the problem is deeper, and that Jefferson was really warning us not only about the danger of a flaw in one man, but in the presidency as well.

After all, the lack of faith Americans have for their leaders goes way beyond Reagan or Clinton—or even Richard Nixon. Bill Clinton wasn't even the first to fudge his agricultural experience. The patrician FDR once visited farmers in upstate New York and told them, "I'm one of you."

It brings to mind Truman's succinct complaint when asked by a friend what he thought of Roosevelt: "He lies." ♦

Reelecting Clinton: A Conservative Case

By Byron York

There's been talk among Jesse Jackson supporters that a run for president in 1996 would be a great way for Jackson to help the Democratic Party—not by winning but by energizing borderline Congressional districts and helping Democrats take the House of Representatives back. Of course the downside is that by doing so he would virtually guarantee the election of a Republican president. We know, say some of the most liberal Democrats, but losing Bill Clinton might not be so bad. Just give us the House back.

Perhaps there's a perverse political lesson in that for the other side. If doctrinaire Democrats would sacrifice their president, maybe Republicans should take another look at him. The inescapable fact is that Clinton has been very, very good for conservatives. His presence has helped them achieve greater focus than they've had in years—and infinitely more power. Now, with Congress on a roll and the GOP almost certain to pick up even more seats in both the House and Senate next year, maybe the best choice for conservatives would be to concentrate on their revolution free from the burdens of controlling the executive branch. Maybe there's a conservative case for Clinton in '96.

Look at the main goal of conservatives—reducing the size, expense, and intrusiveness of government—and ask whether it would be furthered or hindered by having a Republican in the White House.

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The first thing to remember is that Republicans and conservatives did a rather awful job of it during the Reagan/Bush years. The numbers are familiar. Federal expenditures for welfare and income security programs (excluding Social Security) rose from $86 billion in the last year of Jimmy Carter to $207 billion in the last year of George Bush. The budget of the Department of Health and Human Services went from $76 billion to $283 billion in the same time. The Agriculture Department grew from $35 billion to $63 billion. The annual deficit rose from $74 billion to $255 billion. And interest on the debt rose from $53 billion in Carter's last year to $199 billion in Bush's.

When confronted with these ghastly numbers today, the conventional Republican wisdom is twofold: It was the Democratic Congress's fault, and *things will be different when we have a Republican president and a Republican Congress*. But the first statement is wrong, and the uncomfortable truth is the second probably is, too.

Those who still want to blame Democrats for the failures of the Reagan administration should re-read David Stockman's *The Triumph of Politics*. The young budget director of 1981 would be quite at home with the Republican class in the House today. He was using the same arguments back then that they are using now, and he was filled with the energy of an ambitious back-bencher. But his book is a tale of one defeat after another.

Time after time, the conservative president's cabinet secretaries maneuvered to keep their programs un-

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touched, their budgets high and their power undiminished. "Cabinet officers fought to the last drop of blood against even minor cuts," Stockman wrote. They couldn't kill the Department of Education. They couldn't kill Export-Import Bank subsidies to giant corporations. They couldn't even kill Urban Development Action Grants, which Stockman called "perhaps the most ideologically offensive and wasteful bit of federal spending on the block." Still, Stockman, like many Reaganites, continued to believe the administration was on the right path. "How was it I didn't realize," he wrote later, "that if the administration couldn't turn down something like UDAG, it wasn't about to cut all the less ideologically obnoxious programs necessary to balance the budget?"

Would it be different with a Republican president and Congress? Consider a few realities that will hold regardless of which Republican occupies the Oval Office. While there is certainly a larger field of more experienced conservatives ready to take over the executive branch than there was in 1991, does anyone really think there won't be a few Richard (HHS) Schweikers or James (Energy Department) Edwardses the next time? Given the political nature of high-level appointments, the answer has to be that there will. Like their predecessors, they'll fight to protect their turf—and be hoodwinked by the permanent bureaucracies in their departments.

William Bramhall

And what about those departments that should be eliminated? Some GOP strategists concede that top Republicans, once appointed to that long-sought job in the cabinet, might lose their zeal to abolish their departments. But most believe that the presence of a Republican Congress—filled with determined government-cutters—will keep the Republican executive in line.

But having Republicans running HUD, Commerce, and Education might actually make them *harder* to kill. After all, GOP leaders will think, these guys are on our side. And the political reality of Congressional oversight is that while lawmakers have a responsibility to oversee the workings of the executive branch, fealty to that responsibility fades when one's own party is in the White House. Democrat John Conyers, pretty energetic when it came to investigating Republican administrations as chairman of what was then called the House Government Operations Committee, seemed to lose his investigative fervor when a Democrat moved into the White House. He barely held any hearings at all during the two years of united government.

Any government watchdog should be just as uneasy about the prospect of Republicans controlling both branches. When a Republican agency does something stupid and wasteful, will a Republican Congress come down on it as heavily as if the transgressors were Democrats? They'll have to know that doing so might damage their party in the White House. One small example. It was reported recently that Energy Secretary Hazel O'Leary grabbed $400,000 from the department's nuclear regulatory funds to pay for security for her extensive travels. The Republican Congress is rightfully up in arms. It simply strains credulity to believe Republicans will be as vocal and as aggressive when their own party is running the agencies.

In the meantime, the Republican Congress is forcing real reforms on the Democratic-controlled executive branch. Contrast the pace of change at HUD under Jack Kemp (non-existent) and HUD under Henry Cisneros with a Republican Congress on his back (significant). The reforms might well quicken in a second Clinton term; there will no doubt be quite a lot of change at the top of the agencies, and it seems likely the only people Clinton will be able to find who want the jobs and who could be confirmed by a Republican Senate will be moderate in the first place. It's possible that a kind of productive antagonism like that between Congress and HUD will spread throughout the departments.

But maybe a Republican *president* will keep the Republican *Congress* in line. Perhaps the new chief executive will really believe—and act on—the hard truth that you cannot succeed by trimming government programs but must instead rip them out by the roots. That is hard to picture. Unlike any member of Congress, the president is elected nationally; for him, *all* those programs affect some constituent group or another. Would a President Dole, who fights as hard as anyone for money for his voters in Kansas, passionately argue for killing programs that would affect his voters across the country? What would a President Gramm, who denounces pork but says he wants his share to go to Texas, do when his constituency is the entire nation? Perhaps we'd start hearing a lot about

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getting rid of waste, fraud, and abuse, and less talk of reducing government.

This plain political reality would be exacerbated by the people in the White House inner circle. Of Ed Meese, Michael Deaver, James Baker, and their ilk, Stockman wrote, "the White House itself had surrendered to the political necessities of the welfare state early on."

The president's inner circle is politically loyal to him. They watch polls constantly, they think short-term, they're scared of anything that causes his popularity to dip. And he relies on them, regardless of what the ideologues in his own party say. If Bob Dole wants his chief of staff, Sheila Burke, in a critical position, he'll put her in a critical position—because she has been with him on the Long March and is personally loyal to him. It doesn't matter that she's been bashed in every conservative journal of opinion; a president simply has to have loyalty in his inner circle. The "No New Darmans" pledge now being circulated by activist Grover Norquist is clever but unworkable. There will *always* be Darmans.

William Bramhall

If domestic policy were the only issue at stake, a vote for Clinton would be easy. Change the subject to foreign policy—Clinton's biggest weakness—and things are not so clear-cut. But there's still a case to be made.

Given Ronald Reagan's monumental victory over communism, it is certainly impossible to argue that his Republican administration failed in dealing with the major foreign policy question of its day. But that was then and this is now. Look at some of today's most pressing foreign policy issues and ask whether today's Republicans would outclass Clinton.

Republican critics have jumped all over Clinton's policies for years and have ended up being wrong much of the time. In Haiti, for example, Republicans predicted a bloodbath; it didn't happen. They predicted hundreds of thousands of Haitian immigrants flooding Florida; that didn't happen either. In the end, Clinton got rid of Haitian goon Raoul Cedras, and he did it cleanly. Of course he did not bring democracy to Haiti, but who believes Republicans—or anybody—could do that?

Then there's Somalia. Even though the new Clinton administration allowed "mission creep" to set in, and 17 Americans died in a fight that shouldn't have happened as it did, the bottom line is George Bush got us into it, and Bill Clinton got us out.

On Bosnia, the most pressing foreign policy issue of the day, at this point one can simply say that Clinton appears to be learning. And the cost has been much lower than, say, the loss of 243 American lives in a misbegotten mission in Lebanon.

Most of Clinton's failings can be attributed, at least in part, to his weakness for multilateralism—or, to put it less flatteringly, his penchant for hiding behind the United Nations and subordinating American interests to the UN. Some observers trace that to his core belief that America has often acted from imperialist and exploitative motives in the past, and any unilateral U.S. action is likely to continue that shameful tradition. There is no doubt that a Republican, any Republican, president would not share that assumption, and would thus take a comparatively dim view of taking orders from Boutros Boutros-Ghali. Whether that would result in better policy is another thing.

Besides, if they choose, Republicans can have a significant voice, even a dominant one, from Capitol Hill. Congress, a Democratic Congress, voted to nudge Clinton along on Somalia. Even though it's true that the Congress is not particularly well suited to making foreign policy, it can effectively limit what the president does. And with its constitutional mandate to raise and equip the armed forces, it can ensure that American military forces remain adequate to the needs of national security.

Unquestionably, a second Clinton term poses two potentially damaging downsides for conservatives. One is the issue of the Supreme Court and the judiciary in general; the other is the veto.

Start with the courts. Even though the Senate can limit his choices, the president still gets to pick the judges. How much control could the Republicans exercise? Theoretically, quite a lot. But doing so would mean challenging nearly every Clinton appointee sent to Capitol Hill, and even the most fired-up strict constructionist might have trouble with that. More realistically, Republican opposition would be reserved for Clinton's most egregious choices. That means Laurence Tribe is out of the question, but only at the cost of more Stephen Breyer. Given the number of close decisions from the Supreme Court this year, that could

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tip the court against conservatives and give Clinton lasting influence over the course of jurisprudence. Of course, if Republicans win the White House, there is no guarantee that more Scalias will be appointed to the court. Remember David Souter.

As for the Federal courts, Clinton got a slow start appointing appeals court judges. And from now until November 1996, Senate Republicans have no reason to move quickly on any of his appointments. So a one-term Clinton missed the chance to remake the federal courts. But several observers believe a two-term Clinton might be able to name about 40 percent of the total judiciary by the time his eight years are up. Or he might remain sluggish and leave a huge backlog of vacancies to his successor.

Now for the veto. On the surface, it seems like a potent presidential weapon; very few vetoes are overridden. Ronald Reagan vetoed or pocket-vetoed 78 bills; Congress overrode nine. George Bush did it 44 times; he was overridden just once. Harry Truman, the last Democratic president who had to deal with a Republican House (although just for one term), vetoed or pocket-vetoed 250 bills; Congress overrode just 12 of those. So far Bill Clinton has vetoed two bills. It is unclear whether he'll make good on his recent threats to veto more.

William Bramhall

But vetoes don't tell the whole story. If Clinton is reelected and proves particularly combative in a second term, it might still be relatively easy for Congress to have its way with him. All Republican members have to do is take a lesson from the Democrats. In many cases during the Reagan and Bush years, Democrats in Congress made no real attempt to override the president's veto. They simply passed another bill, sometimes altered slightly from the original, and dared the president to veto it again. The president usually backed down. The plain fact is that Congress can defeat the president over the long run, particularly where spending is involved. He can only act on what they send him; if the Congress chooses to pass a budget with no funding for, say, the National Endowment for the Arts, he can't bring it back by using the veto.

Still, the veto could prove a serious threat on the biggest issues. While it is relatively easy—although still not politically possible at this time—to kill the NEA with one blow, what about remaking Medicare? Or privatizing Social Security? They will involve enormous, scorched-earth legislative fights. Winning would certainly be easier with a Republican in the White House, especially since nobody is predicting a veto-proof 288 Republican votes in the House next year. But if the GOP does make significant gains in '96, and a reelected Clinton suffers the traditional midterm losses in '98, the Republican Congress would be virtually invincible on any issue, even without reaching 288. Of course, with a Republican in the White House, the '98 losses would likely go the other way.

Given all this, conservatives face an unavoidable question: Is Clinton really so bad? Even a cursory look at his record shows he is not a dogmatic liberal; just look at how the real liberals hate him. He's certainly not a conservative, nor is he a particularly predictable moderate. He's not really anything, and with Republicans setting the agenda, he has been reduced to an often pathetic me-too-ism.

Would that continue in a second Clinton term? Would a narrow reelection victory convince him once and for all to be a centrist Democrat? Or would it give him confidence to return to his most liberal impulses—or perhaps more accurately, his wife's—and come up with some new Great Leap Forward program like health care reform? Or would he continue to stumble around, hoping to gain some short-term advantage in whatever issue presents itself?

The last seems the best bet. But a more important political reality will set in: A safely reelected, lame-duck Bill Clinton will surely move into the legacy mode. It will be time to work on his place in history. And with Republicans in charge of Congress, he will most likely choose the role of Bulwark Against Extremism. While vowing to search for common ground, he will constantly denounce the right-wingers who have taken control of Washington. At the same time, out of necessity, he will have to further moderate his positions to avoid continued and devastating defeats at their hands.

What a wonderful thing that would be for Republicans. They would enjoy the benefit of having Clinton opposing them rhetorically while caving in to them legislatively. Having Clinton, the perfect enemy, in the White House helps conservatives define themselves. Losing him, and leaving everyone at least nominally on the same side, would complicate the political landscape—and ultimately weaken the drive to reform the Federal government. Republicans should ask themselves whether they really want that to happen. ♦

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Killing California's Quotas: Can't Count on It

By Carolyn Lochhead

If the California Civil Rights Initiative were in a popularity contest, the judges could go ahead and hand out the award. As initiatives go, CCRI—which would ban race and gender preferences in state employment, education, and contracting—is very popular, popular enough to receive a 65 percent approval rating in a poll conducted by the *Los Angeles Times* in early September. But popularity does not ensure the success of an initiative, and for all that CCRI has going for it, if it cannot generate as much cash as it has enthusiasm, it will end up a very popular initiative that failed.

The problem is simply this: Initiatives are expensive, and the CCRI's backers are having trouble raising money. "So far there is no easy money to come by, and the hour is late," says Arnold Steinberg, chief strategist for the CCRI campaign. "We've spent a tremendous amount of time over the last eight months trying to put together a solid financial foundation and it's moved very slowly."

To collect the 694,000 valid signatures needed to place the initiative before voters, Steinberg estimates it will be necessary to gather more than one million signatures by late February. The total cost of the CCRI campaign, he says, will be around $1.75 million. "We really need to get a chunk of money in September and October," he says. "By October 1, our cash flow requirements could easily be $50,000 or more a week." Manager Joe Gelman says they have raised over $400,000 so far, but acknowledges there is little more than $100,000 in the bank.

The initiative needs money fast. Ken Khachigian, a veteran California GOP campaign strategist, draws parallels with the failure last fall of a school-choice initiative that was also prominent nationally but a bust locally. "On school choice it was rather simple," Khachigian says. "We got outspent 10 to 1." He thinks the civil rights initiative could succumb to the same problem. "I've sort of been worried that they're not going to get the signatures, and that would be a disaster," he says. "But if they do get the signatures, they're going to need some seed money to get it going. I mean, they can't wage a zero-expenditure campaign."

The kind of money an initiative campaign needs is not likely to come through individual donations, either. Donations made by individuals are solicited through direct-mail campaigns. The results are never reliable, and they are always costly. The big money, the dependable money, the easy money, has to come through corporations.

But most corporations don't want to get anywhere near the civil rights initiative. "Name a company that's going to write a check for $100,000 and be the first one out of the box to boot," says a Democratic campaign veteran.

The initiative's backers concede the point. Ward Connerly, the University of California regent and black businessman pilloried for leading the move to ban racial preferences in university admissions, is also a board member of the state Chamber of Commerce. After a Chamber speech attacking preferences, Connerly says he got a standing ovation. "Everybody walked up afterward and said, 'We certainly agree with you,'" Connerly says, "but you ask somebody to write a check to put their money where their mouth is, and they get very shaky in their boots."

And after his experience with the big regents battle, Connerly cautions against underestimating opponents. "I don't think there are many initiatives that can pass on the sheer strength of being the right thing," he says.

Ron Unz, a Silicon Valley entrepreneur who made a strong bid against Pete Wilson in last year's gubernatorial primary, says the usual money sources, business-type Republicans, "are very cowardly on this issue." Unlike a candidate who can do favors, the civil rights initiative addresses "a social issue that . . . establishment businesses have pretty much made their peace with," Unz says.

"It's not our issue," explains an official with a large California corporation, "and I think there are a lot of companies who feel that way." He further argues that with the CCRI, "what you have is no upside and all

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downside. If you don't perceive any major positive results and all you can see are negative consequences, your decision is made for you."

Besides, virtually every major corporation made affirmative action part of personnel policy a long time ago. "There's no compelling business need to dismantle affirmative action," says a spokesman for another major California corporation. "It's a fact of life. Our feeling is that regardless of how this debate comes out, we'll probably continue to promote diversity and use affirmative action efforts to get there."

Steinberg's reaction to such thinking is blunt: "There were companies in the South that were comfortable with Jim Crow," he says, "because that was the status quo."

Darrell Issa, a southern California auto-alarm manufacturer who is co-chairing the initiative's campaign, says that whatever one may think about the corporate instinct to play it safe, there's no changing it. "It's very difficult to get corporations very excited about giving large dollars to something they can be traced back to and asked, 'Well, wait a second, are you against affirmative action?'" He believes the initiative will have to survive on individual donations.

Historically, corporations have tended to finance only those initiatives in which they have a clear financial stake. If an initiative will help them, they'll put up the cash; if an initiative will hurt them, then they'll put up the cash to stop it. If it doesn't do one or the other, they're not interested.

In 1990, the environmentalists' wish-list initiative known as Big Green was defeated because corporations believed it was a threat to their pocketbooks. The civil rights initiative, on the other hand, offers no immediate financial rewards if it passes. What it does offer is the likelihood that corporations which sponsor it will face bad publicity, boycotts, and on-site demonstrations.

One public relations executive laughs at the idea of donating to CCRI: "Frankly, for companies, including mine, that make a very big deal about their efforts to diversify the workplace," he says, "the idea of putting one's name on an anti-affirmative action campaign sort of destroys all the good will we've been attempting to build by creating a diversified workplace."

Nothing scares the California business establishment more than talk of boycotts and charges of racism over a social issue that does not explicitly slash their taxes, cut their regulation, or minimize their exposure to litigation. Already, the National Urban League has pulled a $10 million conference out of Los Angeles and others are following. California corporations take such punitive measures seriously.

But corporate timidity is not the only problem. Because other GOP fundraising campaigns are underway, there are an increasing number of political mouths to feed. Wilson, the state's fundraising heavyweight, is sucking up money for his presidential campaign, along with eight other GOP candidates, and 10 other initiatives, not to mention four assembly recall campaigns stemming from the chaos in that chamber inspired by former Speaker Willie Brown. "The competition for dollars is very, very high," says John Herrington, the state GOP chairman.

In such an environment, it is all too easy for Republican sympathizers to evince loyalty simply by sending dollars to this or that GOP candidate instead of sending money to the CCRI. By doing so, a corporation or individual could claim to be supportive of the Republican agenda generally, while avoiding the dangers of backing a specific initiative that takes on the well-entrenched preference colossus.

Opponents of the civil rights initiative, on the other hand, have an established grass-roots network that has no difficulty mobilizing for the cause, and they will probably get money from unions and civil rights groups around the country who perceive the initiative as a national threat. One of the most active—and, by some insider accounts, vehemently alarmist—opponents is Peg Yorkin, the former wife of a prominent Hollywood producer, who heads the Feminist Majority Foundation.

The Foundation paid for a Lou Harris poll that undergirds the opposition strategy of painting the initiative as a fraud which seeks to roll back all anti-discrimination efforts. The poll found voters confused about the definition of affirmative action. They do not necessarily equate it with preferences, and they generally favor policies to aid women and minorities. When voters were told that CCRI would outlaw all affirmative action, support for the initiative suddenly sank. Some voters were even angry, believing they had been deceived. Says Michael Harris of the San Francisco-based Lawyers Committee for Civil Rights, "Our strategy is going to be to point out the deceptiveness and dishonesty of the measure."

He also attacks the initiative as a cynical, professionally-crafted GOP ploy, "tested, revised, polled and focus-grouped," a charge the sponsors vigorously deny. Tom Wood and Glynn Custred, the drafters of the initiative, are "front guys," Harris argues. "They try to affect this appeal as a couple of homespun pro-

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fessors who worked on this Chevy in the backyard under the shade tree and came up with it together."

Initiative backers insist that they want to keep the measure non-partisan and multiracial to avoid fueling the bitter polarization it is intended to salve. They asked the legislature to put the initiative on the March ballot instead of November's, but Speaker Brown strong-armed a party-line vote to deny it. At this point, non-partisanship seems unlikely.

Still, if the initiative's popularity stays high, Democrats in marginal districts could end up backing it. Its simple language contains a powerful appeal to equal-opportunity liberals. Democrats openly fear it as a classic party-splitter. "It drives a wedge right between our policy base and the people we have to get votes from," says Darry Sragow, a California Democratic strategist. "Most Democratic officeholders and consultants are uncertain at this point and simply do not know how they are going to handle the initiative."

Although Pete Wilson's presidential campaign is stumbling, as governor, his influence in California will remain considerable. His highly publicized political instincts will be the key here. If Wilson believes affirmative action will help galvanize Republican votes at the state level in 1996 and thereby ensure that he has a friendlier state legislature to work with in the final two years of his term, he will push CCRI. In the past, when the polls have spoken, Democrats have not shied away from forging a strategic alliance with Wilson. Sens. Dianne Feinstein and Barbara Boxer, staunch liberals both, raced to prove themselves tough on illegals. "Pete Wilson has a long history of identifying hot buttons and exploiting them," says Sragow, who has been in three losing campaigns against him.

If all else fails, the initiative can count on Democratic Disarray, which has achieved the status of a proper noun. Democrats have no coherent or persuasive counter message, and are bickering over whether to back an alternative ballot measure.

The public is making up its mind right now about affirmative action and opponents are offering only a vacuum, says a highly-placed state Democratic aide. "There's this blank wall, and the anti-affirmative action people and Republicans in particular are giving people the language to be against affirmative action." Only what this operative calls "really liberal die-hard activists" are staunchly defending affirmative action, "and that language does not resonate outside the community. They may have the power to get their own community stirred up, but they don't have the power to reach the electorate."

Defending affirmative action as reparations for past discrimination, or attacking opponents as racist, won't work, the aide argues. "I can't use it. And if I don't have the tools—the language—to go out and talk to my friends and debate my relatives at dinner on why this is a bad initiative, and why affirmative action is good, we will lose."

The one politically viable response that the Democrats could muster—ignoring race and focusing on women—parallels the civil rights initiative in this respect: It is a wedge issue capable of dividing Republicans and pulling moderate Democrats back into the fold. The Democratic aide contends, "If you gave me $2 million, I'd do a long, slow media campaign in radio, newspapers, and cable TV in California, and make it a women's issue, and drive a wedge right back into the Republican party. You'd see moderate Republicans afraid to touch this issue."

A counter-initiative would be distracting at best, in her view. "By the time they negotiate the language of that initiative with Maxine Waters," she says, "they're going to have two initiatives they can't support."

If the past is a predictor, however, Democrats will probably wait until three months before the election and throw $2 million of ads on television—after people have already decided. "Democrats need to be out there right now, changing people's minds and giving them a reason to be for affirmative action," this operative says. "Do you know how much money the Democrats have spent on polling and focus groups on this issue? I could use it for a bonfire. They're still holding meetings at the White House trying to come up with strategy."

Most important, the highly regarded Field Poll in California shows no gender gap, says pollster Merv Field—and the idea that women will rise en masse to oppose CCRI is really the last hope for the initiative's opponents. "The only way I could see it defeated is if white women got behind the 'no' side, but we haven't seen that," he says.

On the contrary, Field argues that "what we have seen is that white women and successful minority women feel that they have gotten where they are—as lawyers, journalists, professional people—not so much by affirmative action but on their own merit."

Unless those numbers change, CCRI is a winner. But funny things can happen on the way to passage of popular ballot measures in the Golden State. Democrats thought they had a sure winner with Big Green, remember. And whatever happened to Governor Wilson's welfare reforms and school vouchers? ♦

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The Land Beyond Left and Right: An Allegory

By David Brooks

This is a time of such profound change that we need a dynamic center, that is not in the middle of what is left and right, but is way beyond it.

—Bill Clinton

On September 1~ in the Year of Our Lord 199~, I undertook a journey to the Land Beyond Left and Right. It was a long voyage, for I had to navigate past the Scylla of liberalism and the Charybdis of conservatism; steer around what E.J. Dionne has called the False Choices; and traverse what Bill Bradley refers to as the Two Familiar Ruts.

At each turn the Tired Old Labels sang to me in the seductive voice of the Siren, and I could have been sucked back, as an editorial in the Democratic Leadership Council's magazine warned, into "the ideological and interest group battles of the Industrial Era." But at long last I crossed the meridian into a new, post-Cold War/Information Age/Global Economy era that requires fresh approaches and new thinking.

I docked at the Land Beyond Left and Right and was confronted with a fan of roadways, all of them marked, "To the Center." The sun was shining, and everybody was sitting around watching Ken Bode's *Washington Week in Review*.

Bill Clinton and Al Gore were there, having gained entry in tribute to the words that appeared in their 1992 book *Putting People First*: "Our policies are neither liberal nor conservative, neither Democratic nor Republican. They are new. They are different." There was a crew of *Washington Monthly* alumni, led by Dionne, whose book *Why Americans Hate Politics* described the shortcomings of the choice between left and right. The entire Democratic Leadership Council was there, circulating quickly to make themselves appear more numerous. In a special corner Colin Powell was holding court with the great post-ideological hopes of yesteryear: Senator Bradley, Gary Hart, and Michael Dukakis, the latter still mumbling that the real issue is "competence, not ideology."

The social scale of politics peaks in the center. And in these prestigious circles, there were no yahoos to be found. People who insist on adhering to liberalism or conservatism find themselves linked. Liberals have to worry about being embarrassed by Louis Farrakhan, while conservatives are tied to Pat Robertson's books. But those who have taken up permanent residence in the Land Beyond are tied to no one. They sometimes call on those still clinging to the Tired Old Labels to repudiate their allies, but they themselves never have to repudiate anyone. They categorize others while remaining uncategorized.

Nonetheless, a traveler in their midst is tempted to make a few generalizations. As a group, the Beyondists are reasonable and open-minded. Rarely motivated by personal animosities, they can be generous and fair with people on all sides. In a world in which to be liberal is politically untenable and to be conservative is socially unacceptable, it is a wonderful thing to be beyond left and right.

The Land Beyond is, in design, a practical place. Each issue is not just another front in a polarizing culture war. Instead, the Beyondists can begin each problem anew, forgetting bigger fights and getting down to an open exchange about the nitty gritty. "We need politics to deal with the things it is good at dealing with—the practical matters like schools and roads, education and jobs," Dionne writes.

In the Land Beyond, many people are able to rise above politics and the tawdry partisan fray. Bill Bradley tolerated the muck of politics for as long as he could, but in August it became too much for him, and he announced his retirement from the Senate. When David Gergen went to join the Clinton White House, the president praised him for his "sense of patriotism that transcends partisanship." Beyondists recognize that both extremes contain a grain of truth and the best solution probably lies somewhere in between.

Nor are those Beyond trapped in the past. On the contrary: They understand we are living in an unprecedented age. In the *New Democrat*, the DLC magazine, Michael Rothschild notes that by the year 2000, 2 billion microchips will flow from factories every week. In the new information age, he says, the left-right di-

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vide "will seem as anachronistic as Checkpoint Charlie." In this new age, the argument isn't over more government or less government; it's over better government.

The visitor can forgive himself for wondering if he hasn't discovered utopia: a place where bright, open-minded people can be seen discussing issues in civil tones. The Land Beyond has the sparkle of freshness, as old conventions are shed, and people look for new ideas to go with a new era.

But on the second day in this land, clouds appear. Questions nag. For example, why is it always Democrats who argue that labels don't matter anymore? When Oliver North called him a liberal, Mario Cuomo protested, "I don't like your labels. I don't buy shoes that way." Barbara Mikulski wrote in the *Washington Post* that the words liberal and conservative "have become cliches . . . with little meaning." A cynic might conclude that what these liberals are really trying to move beyond is the number 43—the percentage of Americans who vote for liberal presidential candidates.

Neil Shigley

But even among the intellectuals, Beyondists are likely to have liberal pedigrees. Sometimes they seem loosely akin to the non-aligned bloc in the Cold War, loudly non-aligned, yet somehow usually siding with one side.

E.J. Dionne wrote a 400-page book on the need to go beyond the old false choices, and in his final chapter he lays out some key policy ideas: Make the tax code more progressive by raising taxes on the rich; reform welfare by increasing benefits to the working poor; create a national service program for the young. Four hundred pages is a long way to go to wind up back at tax hikes for the rich.

Conservatives, by contrast, seem to be quite happy with the conservative label. They embrace it. It seems coherent and meaningful to them. Republican candidates call themselves conservatives, even if the label doesn't really apply. It may be that the effort to move beyond labels has less to do with the exhaustion of ideologies than it does with the exhaustion of liberalism.

But the peace in the Land Beyond is darkened by a deeper anxiety. The Beyondists have gone past the old creeds, but it is not clear whether those beliefs have been replaced by anything else.

In recent administrations there has always been at least one person who is filled with new ideas and who thinks in new categories. The Bush administration was graced by New Paradigmer James Pinkerton, and until recently, the Clinton administration had its William Galston. Journalists love these visionaries, for they are interesting and provocative. But in the end they get little accomplished. Legislation has to go to Congress and troops must be mobilized. The new thinkers have trouble mobilizing power. Similarly, Congressional Beyondists stride through their careers amidst great press clippings and provocative speeches, but offer little in the way of realigning legislation.

Clinton and Gore campaigned as Beyondists and still talk the game, but when it comes to governing, they have produced just two Beyondist policies, Americorps and Reinventing Government, neither of which is a realigning reform. In the end Bill and Al probably had no choice but to veer left. On the budget and on health care, they did not try to forge new Beyondist coalitions, but sought traditional partisan Democratic triumphs instead. Liberals may be out of fashion, but they still stand for big policies (national health insurance) and they still have the institutions (the AARP and NOW) and the political might to mobilize behind those policies.

And it is not only that the Beyondists are unable to mobilize political power; intellectually, their best ideas are perpetually just over the horizon. What's needed, they say, is that we begin a process of rethinking. They are great at beginnings. The problem is that unless they reach a compelling conclusion, they remain more defined by their desire to stay in The Land Beyond than by their ability to actually arrive at something else.

Beyondists like Bill Bradley are free-floating individuals, producing documents that are thoughtful but with little resonance. When Bradley announced his retirement, dozens of articles noted that he had given intelligent speeches on subjects like race. Nobody pointed to a single big idea or a novel approach that had been introduced in those speeches. When it came to actual votes, Bradley conducted himself as a pretty conventional liberal, with an ADA rating hovering near 90, and with a legislative record that was, after the 1986 tax bill, not distinguished.

The central problem with Beyondists and centrists is that they misunderstand the way ideas are developed. The policy gabfests that Bill Clinton so loves are

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based on the premise that such meetings exist for people of good will to come together and solve problems. There are two flaws in this sentiment. The first has to do with the phrase "come together." The second has to do with the word "problems."

"Coming together" was big in the 1960s. Songs, speakers, and pamphlets were perpetually urging people to do it. It was at the heart of the utopianism of the New Left: Conflict is not inevitable; different views are reconcilable; most conflicts can be hammered out with cooperation and better communication. These premises, of course, were the basis of the New Left's approach to the Cold War.

Neil Shigley

It's probably no accident that many of the people who have declared themselves beyond left and right are, like the president and vice president, children of the 1960s. They may have shed the content of some 60s ideas, but they absorbed 60s ideas about how the world should work.

The idea that the purpose of politics is to solve "problems" has deeper roots—in rationalism. The Beyondists are big on solving problems. In *Why Americans Hate Politics*, Dionne laments that "over the last 30 years of political polarization, politics has stopped being a deliberative process through which people resolved disputes, found remedies and moved forward." A symptom of the problem, he writes, is that Americans talk about "issues" instead of problems: "Problems are solved; issues are merely what politicians use to divide the citizenry and advance themselves."

Well, in engineering, problems may be solved, but in politics it's never over. The War on Poverty did not "solve" poverty, affirmative action did not "solve" racism. And no other programs could have done so because important political problems are not solvable in any final sense. Man is not a perfectible creature, so any effort to address one fault inevitably opens up other (and hopefully smaller) faults.

A pre-1960s liberal, Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. had it right (though he was a little grandiose) when he declared in 1949, "So long as society stays free, so long will it continue in its state of tension, breeding contradiction, breeding strife. . . . For conflict is alone the guarantee of freedom; it is the instrument of change; it is, above all the source of discovery, the source of art, the source of love. The choice we face is not between progress with conflict and progress without conflict. The choice is between conflict and stagnation."

Things are often irreconcilable; that is a sad reality. Liberals promote one set of virtues, a lot of them having to do with compassion. Conservatives promote another set of virtues, a lot of them having to do with achievement. And the champions of these two "ideologies" spend their time struggling to give greater weight to their own constellation of virtues. The labels "liberal" and "conservative" have survived at least a half century of charges that they are obsolete. They have done so because they represent two worldviews that are not compatible.

Not every issue in America is polarized—most Americans occupy a middle ground on abortion and racial matters, and foreign policy disputes are for the moment unformed—but the struggle between left and right reflects something profound. It isn't over how to solve a plumbing problem. It's a long competition between virtues.

And it is a healthy competition. Some Soviets, and some Western neoconservatives such as Jean-François Revel, thought that the democracies would lose the Cold War because they were always tearing themselves apart with internal disputes between right and left. But as it transpired, these internal disputes allowed the West to remain dynamic and creative. Another species may think more acutely in an atmosphere of friendship and cooperation, but for most people, a good motivation to argue well is to humiliate the sons of bitches on the other side.

Debates are not dominated by the loosely tethered individuals who declare themselves above the partisan fray. They are dominated by people who are self-conscious about their premises and firm in their conclusions, who nail their theses to a door.

Such people don't think about the center but force the center to move toward them. For example, a Charles Murray, someone with a definite creed, will daringly move the welfare debate by arguing an extreme position, and all the Beyondists will be swept a bit toward his position, and will eventually be adding their contribution within the new framework.

It is the "ideologues" who set the agenda by moving out in front of the debate, and they define the field of play by defining the ground over which the debate

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will be fought. If you watch David Gergen over time, you can trace which way the frame of debate has moved, but you cannot expect to learn where it is about to move.

A politically plausible idea—let's stay with welfare reform—rarely emerges full-blown from a single person or group. It is produced by a struggle between left and right. Michael Novak hits from one side, William Julius Wilson hits from another. They never reconcile, but each side learns from the assault of the other. Voters then choose which approach will dominate.

The Beyondists have several disadvantages when they enter the battle of ideas. In the first place, they always start from square one. Their boast, echoing President Clinton, is that we are in an unprecedented age demanding new thinking. This was the song of the modernists about a hundred years ago too. But as the history of modernism shows, while it is exhilarating to begin anew, "fresh" ideas have a way of failing. The ones that work have been tested over time.

People with definite creeds don't have to reinvent the wheel. Conservatives and liberals inherit intellectual traditions; they can learn from lines of thinkers who shared their basic precepts. Conservatives go around wearing Adam Smith neckties. They cite Burke or Jefferson or Aquinas. More recently, Milton Friedman, Lionel Trilling, James Burnham, and others did some heavy lifting; it's not necessary for today's conservatives to do it all over again. Beyondists have to start from scratch.

Neil Shigley

The labeled have an even greater advantage over the labelless. Liberals and conservatives join movements. A free marketeer can go anywhere in the world and have dinner with somebody from the local free market think tank—in London, Jerusalem, Capetown. Domestically, conservative and liberal magazines form their own communities. Conferences and bulletin boards, parties and dinners reinforce the bonds.

It is this web of friendships that gives a creed its dynamism. People gossip, people talk. Look at the newsletters put out by the CATO Institute or the American Enterprise Institute; there will be photos of politicians and think tankers and academics standing in happy conversational klatches, clutching cocktail glasses against their stomachs. That's a political movement in action.

One of the virtues of being a member of a movement is that it takes you outside your own narrow concerns and forces you to consider others unlike yourself. An evangelical Christian finds himself linked with, and learning from, Orange County libertarians and New York Jewish neoconservatives. This breeds a sense of tolerance for those whose brand of conservatism may differ. It also explains why members of the Christian Coalition are more tolerant of outsiders than outsiders are of them.

Beyondists point to contradictions between those who call themselves conservatives, and so declare that the labels have no meaning. Asking that categories be as rigorously enforceable as scientific taxonomy is asking too much. They are loose groupings—conservatism emphasized Kempism in the 1980s and emphasizes Kasichery in the 1990s. They contain diversity (from Ralph Reed to P.J. O'Rourke) while maintaining solidarity.

Movements nurture the young. They offer mundane things like job opportunities, but they also impart education and give their members a sense of higher purpose. In the war of ideas, battalions do well. Each foot soldier makes an unconscious deal: He dispossesses himself of the privilege of being uncategorizable and completely autonomous, and in exchange he gets a place in the larger movement.

The Beyondists are above the compromise that membership in a movement entails, as they are beyond partisan politics. In short they are above the fray. At their worst, they seem like Kevin Phillips—solitary complainers who inveigh against a world that will not live up to their standards. At their best they are acute observers, but observers only.

So one leaves the Land Beyond Left and Right remembering what the 19th-century journalist Walter Bagehot said of the post-ideological politicians of his own day: "They are betwixt and between, and make distinctions which no one heeds; they live in a debatable land, which each party attacks and neither defends. . . . They must endure the tedium of inaction, and bear the constant sense of irritating helplessness. Though they are the best of rulers for the world, they are the last persons to be likely to rule." ♦

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Hollywood and Vile

By Andrew Ferguson

Like all actors these days, Elizabeth Berkley is a student of the human condition, engaged in diligent research that might deepen her artistic understanding. And so when she won the role of the professional stripper Nomi in *Showgirls*, the big-budget "adults-only" movie that opened to much fanfare on Sept. 22, she befriended professional strippers to plumb the depths of their lives, as method actors do. As she reports in recent interviews, she "learned a lot from the women who take off their clothes for a living."

At first blush the statement may seem odd, since it suggests that Elizabeth Berkley is a woman who *doesn't* take her clothes off for a living, notwithstanding the two-hour movie currently in general release in which she does take her clothes off, repeatedly, and presumably not for free. Her stripper confidantes are entitled to wonder: If Elizabeth Berkley doesn't take her clothes off for a living, then who does?

But it is impolite to make this rather obvious point at this moment in the evolution of the American cinema. Miss Berkley is a mainstream actress—former star of an unwatchable sitcom called *Saved by the Bell*. And *Showgirls* is a mainstream movie, produced by a major studio, MGM; written by a famous screenwriter, Joe Eszterhas; and filmed by a much-praised director, Paul Verhoeven. And if it happens to show large numbers of naked women engaged in sexual acts with the intention of arousing its audience, it's not pornography, it's . . . as I say, a mainstream movie produced by a major studio.

Showgirls tells the story of Miss Berkley's Nomi, a down-on-her-luck dancer with tons of raw talent who comes to Las Vegas in hopes of making it big. The theme is something of a departure for Eszterhas, who was paid more than $2 million for his screenplay. While it's true that he first found screen success as the writer of the early-80s hit *Flashdance*, which told the story of a down-on-her-luck dancer with tons of raw talent who comes to Pittsburgh in hopes of making it big, over the last several years he has concentrated on murder mysteries—*Basic Instinct, Music Box, Jagged Edge, Sliver*—in which a protagonist is at first suspected of having committed murder and (in a surprise twist) actually has! With *Showgirls* Eszterhas proves at last that he can do more than rewrite the same story, over and over. He can rewrite two stories over and over.

Showgirls embellishes and advances the earlier *Flashdance* formula. In *Flashdance* the girls danced in leotards and baggy sweaters; in *Showgirls* they dance naked. The newer movie is darker, filmed in the half-light that forces critics to use words like *demimonde* and *gritty*. Shortly after hitchhiking into Vegas, Nomi finds work as a stripper in a cheesy, poorly lit strip club. How cheesy? Lucky customers with a spare $50 can get her to "lap-dance"—an innovation of the safe-sex era whose mechanics are irrelevant here. The movie depicts those mechanics in detail, to thunderous music, and Miss Berkley, ever the Stanislavskian, attacks her work with gusto, her back bent like a wishbone, her pneumatic lips parted in a come-hither from hell.

Despite these professional satisfactions, Nomi aches for a more legitimate venue for her dancing: a topless revue at an upscale hotel on the Strip. Through pluck and luck she wins a part. She thinks it's going to be all glitter and colored lights. In fact it's the same old gritty demimonde. There is some violence as the bad guys get their comeuppance, and the movie closes with Nomi hitching back out of town.

In the world of hard-core porn, I'm told, wily filmmakers stick to a formula: so many acts of fellatio and no more, so many minutes of cunnilingus, a set number of lesbian encounters, one incident of *ménage à trois*—and presto: a regulation porno movie. As the first big-budget film to win both a NC-17 rating and a wide theatrical release, *Showgirls* may similarly serve as a template for its successors—if, as its distributors and producers hope, it encourages other mainstream filmmakers to be as bold as they.

In that case the formula, based on *Showgirls*, will be: 20 to 30 minutes of full frontal female nudity, two scenes of simulated heterosexual sex to the point of climax, one scene of overt lesbianism and one soulful lesbian French kiss (assuming the French approve), and several dozen uses of the word "fuck," so long as it is spoken in husky tones by a pretty girl with pneumatic lips.

This sounds like a can't-miss formula, but for the successful execution of big-budget porn, some negative rules apply as well. *Showgirls* does not, contrary to news reports, deal in "explicit" sex. There are no gross-out close-ups of the sex act;

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in the half-light no nodes glisten, no protuberances swell mysteriously. On the single occasion when full frontal male nudity would seem called for, the camera cuts demurely to the actor's sculpted torso. The overarching purpose of the movie is of course prurient, but its lack of success in this regard is reassuring. As you find your seat in the theater you needn't worry that Pee Wee Herman sat there for the matinee.

The final negative rule is most important: The filmmakers must never admit what they're up to. A few years ago, Eszterhas and Verhoeven were responsible for *Basic Instinct*, which was threatened with an NC-17 rating before it was trimmed to qualify for an "R." This time they and their bankrollers simply accepted the NC-17 rating without complaint—and with, most likely, a great deal of relief. The stricter rating not only guarantees publicity for an otherwise uninteresting movie but also casts Eszterhas and Verhoeven as pioneers on the frontier of free expression.

Thus do we have one of those strange disjunctions so common nowadays: a pair of filmmakers courageously challenging Victorian repression even as their movie, the raunchiest mainstream picture in history, opens on more than 1,000 screens nationwide.

Before its release the distributors worried loudly that their film would be stonewalled: theaters wouldn't screen it, newspapers wouldn't accept the ads, TV stations would decline to run its promos. One by one, of course, these barriers to art have come tumbling down. "We have dispelled the myth that you wouldn't be able to advertise NC-17 movies," an MGM executive announced triumphantly to *U.S. News*.

The problem is that even here, in our myth-dispelling age, as you dispel old myths you tend to generate new ones, to which the deluded cling just as ferociously. Eszterhas, for example, defends his work like so: "*Showgirls* is a morality tale. It is about a young woman who refused to be corrupted at the deepest part of her being. Tempted by a world of drugs, glitter and loveless sex, she turns physically and psychologically against the forces trying to corrupt her."

Despite weighty evidence of their technical incompetence—the movie's astounding implausibilities, its clunky shifts of mood, its confused timeline—Eszterhas and Verhoeven drop tantalizing hints that they have admitted to themselves the depth of their cynicism.

When Nomi befriends an aspiring choreographer—a veteran of the Alvin Ailey dance troupe!—he ridicules her desire to "move up" from the cheesy stripclub to the topless revue at the upscale hotel. At the strip club, he explains, "they want tits and ass and you have to give 'em tits and ass. There [at the hotel] they pretend to want something else—and you still have to give 'em tits and ass."

"We're whores," a fellow dancer later tells a disbelieving Nomi. "We cash the check and show them what they want to see." At such moments a viewer can't help but wonder: Could it be that this is a knowing postmodern joke—a comment within the movie about the movie itself?

Consider the scene, there in the darkened multiplexes of America, where moviegoers pay $6.50 to watch simulated sex while pretending they want to watch a film, which stars a pretty young woman bumping and grinding naked while pretending to be an actress playing a character, who was conceived by a famous screenwriter pretending to create a morality tale while writing a sanitized stroke movie. The potential for postmodern irony is dizzying.

Is it possible that with these lines of dialogue Eszterhas and Verhoeven are tweaking us all in a sophisticated, mischievous gag?

Nah. ♦

Books

EDITING GEORGE GILDER

By Midge Decter

In the late 70s I was working as an editor in a publishing house whose special claim to fame was that it made serious profit from serious books.

I was new to book publishing, not yet totally disabused of the old romantic notion that it was an industry dependent on relations between writers and editors. And one of my most ardent editorial ambitions was to get my hands on a young writer named George Gilder.

George had already published two small books that should have been works of major importance on the much agitated subject of the relations between the sexes; but aside from earning him the undying and loudly expressed hatred of the women's lib movement, *Sexual Suicide* and *Naked Nomads* had been pretty much overlooked. In part, George was simply way too far ahead of the cultural curve. Let no one imagine that originality of mind, that quality which is paid

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endless lip-service in the bastions of culture, is either recognized or welcomed when it is in fact the genuine article. But it may also have been true that George had been too quick, too breezy, and much too brief in fleshing out the central idea in both books—that young men who are not required to marry and look after women and the children they bear will remain a tribe of "naked nomads." Such a tribe will be anomic at best and more than likely lawless and savage.

Precisely because this message went so much against the theology of the then-established cultural church on matters of both race and sex, I thought that George should have been more weighty and insistent—if you will, less entertaining—in bringing it. So I took him out to lunch one day and told him so, and further informed him that what he needed as an author was me.

I signed and subsequently edited two of George's books. The second, *Wealth and Poverty*, was a bestseller—possibly the company's biggest up to that time—and served to establish George as a thinker to be reckoned with. But the first, *Visible Man*, was a bewildering failure—a failure now being given a welcome new chance at life.

In his introduction to the reissue of *Visible Man* (ICS Press/Discovery Institute, 240 pages, $16.95), George tells a rather different story from the one I have just related. He says he gave the book to me because I offered him $500 more for it than another publisher (and in the bargain also got the rights to *Wealth and Poverty*).

Perhaps in the end, I am retroactively abashed to think, the ardor of my pursuit actually made little impression on him. Or perhaps his memory has been colored by his annoyance at me for our disagreement over his title—which is a story he does tell.

Visible Man, you see, is a true story about how the welfare system and its culture emasculated and destroyed a charming and even in some respects capable young black called Sam from the slums of Albany, N.Y. George wanted to call the book Sam Beau, and I forbade him to do so. I argued that it was time for him to present himself not as the provocateur suggested by that baldly ironic race-conscious title but as his true self, a uniquely gifted and serious social critic. In his introduction, George doesn't quite say that I thereby doomed the book to failure, but the suggestion is in the air. And perhaps he was right; his title itself might at least have become the object of some kind of heated public reaction. As it was, the book fell down a deep well, having received among the major media only one dull and truly witless review in the daily *New York Times*.

So what is this book so many found either too daunting or too off-putting to read in 1978? After all, by that time the problems of, as well as the problems for everyone else created by, young black men of the inner cities were already more than perfectly "visible."

"I am aware of the importance of such young men to society," said a leading conservative intellectual to me when I complained about the general lack of response to the book, "but I don't like to read too much about them."

Visible Man is a lively, sometimes even amusing, sometimes touching, sometimes infuriating, sometimes harrowing, often sad and ultimately hopeless, account of a young black named Mitchell "Sam" Brewer. Sam can sketch well enough to hold a job in the New York State Division of Historic Preservation; enjoys the concerned patronage of at least two attentive and long-suffering employers and several co-workers; and not least, is able to pluck the heartstrings of the cold-eyed but finally tender-hearted George Gilder. But at the same time Sam cannot stay sober for too long, cannot reliably show up for work, cannot stay out of fights or out of jail, cannot resist the need to punch out his women, and certainly cannot support his children.

In George's updated postscript to the new edition, we are told that in the end Sam sired three children, all of whom ended up severely disturbed and in foster care. And Sam himself was ultimately sentenced to 20 years in Dannemora for rape. A naked nomad truly, living out the destiny George Gilder had so vividly depicted some years before.

As George makes clear, Sam is not the first in his family line to embody disorder. He has grown up in an unloveliness that is consonant with his own. Born out of wedlock, palmed off on an aunt while his mother was off here and there with a series of husbands, he was not, shall we minimally say, given the best of send-offs. Indeed, when George first lays eyes on Sam, he is lying in a forest of tubes in a hospital bed recovering from a serious stab wound administered to him by his mother's then-husband—the first of his stepfathers to be genuinely fond of Sam and in whose home he always finds a bed and a welcome.

The irony here runs deeper than the fact of a fond stepdad with a shiv. For the tragedy of Sam's life is that unlike his stepfathers, he is being progressively unmanned by women, particularly Beverly, his 16-year-old "wife" and the mother of his children. That indeed is the source of his ultimately uncontainable violence against them. And the women in his world unman Sam by

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means of AFDC and the welfare system.

Once she has his first baby, Beverly brings in more money from the public coffers than he does from his job. She does not depend on him to support her and the children. Quite the opposite; Sam is an impediment to Beverly, a danger to her livelihood. Which means that, whenever he is around, he is in her household on sufferance. Having lost his already feeble capacity to stay calm enough and sober enough to turn up for work, he is reduced to begging her for quarters and half-dollars for beer. Fighting, then, is the only way he can sustain his *amour propre*.

When the book was written, crack cocaine was not yet in the picture. Sam was strictly a dope and alcohol man. Nor does there seem to have been much gunplay, again at least not where Sam was concerned. But otherwise, the whole world is now acquainted with many different versions of this same sad story. Indeed, one of George's intentions in telling us about Sam back there in 1978 is now moot: to illustrate how little racial discrimination—for so long the pet alibi of civil-rights "leaders"—had to do with Sam's inability to pull himself together. Even those who continue in the old fashion to invoke the term "racism" in explanation of the social crisis embodied by the likes of Sam can barely suppress a yawn as they do so. Nor is the responsibility of the welfare system for this crisis a controversial idea these days. Now everybody from the president of the United States on down to the most pious community worker is prepared to condemn it.

What keeps *Visible Man* both fresh and jolting, even today, is its precision. A story that is truly told never loses its power to illuminate. Moreover, in an essay about current notions of welfare reform that begins the new edition, George is yet again the trenchant thinker ahead of his time. In his view, the idea of sending welfare-dependent mothers to work—the notion at the center of all current proposals for undoing the welfare culture—is precisely off the mark. Sending welfare mothers for work training, says George, will only leave their children completely at the mercy of public institutions, and that is the very last thing they need. In addition, George has faith that not too long after welfare has been overhauled, its erstwhile beneficiaries will have figured out how to "game" whatever is the new system.

One of George's signal qualities as an analyst of the welfare culture is his respect for the underclass—far removed from the contempt welfare reformers display when they continually assert that their policies will have precisely the effect they intend. Far more important—and illuminating—is the message to would-be welfare reformers that George wishes them to take away from Sam's story:

> The problem of hard-core poverty today lies mainly with violent and disruptive men and boys, not with unemployed or undertrained women. . . . Among the poor, female domination of work is the problem, not the solution.

Thus, "government training funds, job preferences and other interventions must be channeled chiefly toward boys and men."

It is a tall order. George himself, I would venture to say, does not know precisely how we should go about filling it. But he is right, of course. Paying close attention—at long last—to the adventures of Sam Brewer will not by itself yield any simple prescriptions for policy, but it would certainly set everybody to looking in the right direction.

That's an exciting prospect—almost, but not quite, enough to make me wish I were back in publishing. ♦

The sculptor Frederick Hart's story would fit right into Giorgio Vasari's marvelous *Lives of the Artists*, assuming the great Renaissance biographer might have had a taste for tales from the boiled-peanut Hoppin' John country of eastern South Carolina. Vasari doted on figures such as Giotto, the peasant boy who is discovered, miraculously, to have the divine gift of pouring living—or at least gloriously lifelike—human forms out of his fingertips and pulling them out of stone and clay. Giotto, as Vasari tells it, was out tending his father's sheep in a field one day in the year 1286 when the painter Cimabue happened to pass by on the way from Florence to a nearby village and saw him drawing a sheep on a slab of rock with a pointed stone. Bowled over by the boy's ability, Cimabue got the family's permission to take Giotto to Florence as his apprentice. With that twist of fortune the flowering of Renaissance painting and sculpture began, and the erstwhile peasant boy became the most famous artist of his time. On the level of unlikely paths, at any rate, Frederick Hart's good fortune out-Lotto's Giotto's.

Hart was born in Atlanta in 1943, but his mother died when he was 3, and he was packed off to her relatives in Conway, South Carolina, over near the coast in Horry County, where folks ate their peanuts boiled in salty water and their black-eyed peas cooked with tomatoes, Hoppin' John style. His high school career was distinguished by episodes of juvenile delinquency, his obsession with drawing pic-

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Frederick Hart: A Tribute

By Tom Wolfe

tures, particularly during classes in which he was supposed to be doing other things, and the fact that he failed the ninth grade—twice—but nevertheless managed to get into the University of South Carolina at the age of 16, by shooting the moon on the Scholastic Aptitude Test. He lasted six months. He was expelled when he became the lone white student to join 250 black students in a 1961 civil rights demonstration and spent four days in jail for breach of the peace.

Informed that the Ku Klux Klan was looking for him, he fled to Washington, DC, and by and by got a job as an apprentice ornamentalist for the Gianetti Studio of Architectural Sculpture. Ornamentalists molded eggs, darts, acanthus leaves, and the like out of plaster for friezes and cornices. While at Gianetti he was discovered not by a Cimabue but by a stone carver from Italy, Roger Morigi. As Morigi's apprentice, Hart learned to conceive of form in stone from the carver's perspective, from the inside out.

Frederick Hart in his studio; Ex Nihilo *in background*

courtesy of Chesley

By day Morigi and Hart carved stone for Washington National Cathedral, an enormous structure in the Middle English Gothic style. By night Hart began sculpting on his own, and by the age of 25 he was pulling human forms out of clay and stone with a breathtaking facility. In 1971 he learned that the cathedral would be looking for a sculptor to adorn the entire west facade. The theme was to be the Creation, with the *pièce de résistance* a two-story-high, 21-ft.-wide stone bas-relief above the main entrance. Morigi urged Hart to enter the competition. The young would-be sculptor spent three years conceiving and preparing a series of scale models. In 1974, at the age of 31, a complete unknown, a stone carver by trade, Hart won what would turn out to be the most monumental commission for religious sculpture in the United States in the 20th century. He spent 10 years creating the full-size models in clay and overseeing Morigi and his men as they carved *Ex Nihilo*, depicting mankind emerging from the swirling rush of chaos.

Hart was now at the same point in his career as Giotto when Giotto did his first great painting, the Virgin Mary trembling before the Archangel Gabriel, for the high altar of the Abbey of Florence in 1301. From that time on, Giotto's life was an uninterrupted ascension to wealth, the company and patronage of the rich and powerful, surpassing fame, and the universal admiration of his fellow artists. For Hart, the more earthly rewards came soon enough. In 1982, after a terrific imbroglio in which veterans

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protested the tombstone-like, antiheroic look of the black wall chosen for the Vietnam Veterans Memorial in Washington, he was commissioned to add a group of three soldiers to the site. In 1985, Ronald Reagan appointed him to the Commission of Fine Arts. In 1994, he completed a statue of Jimmy Carter for the State Capitol in Atlanta and was at work on a statue of the late senator Richard Russell and a statue of Luis Carlos Galan, the Colombian presidential candidate slain by drug cartel assassins, to be erected in front of the presidential palace in Bogota. By that time, many thousands of his smaller pieces cast in clear acrylic resin had been sold through galleries. Add to this the throngs who came annually to see his *Three Soldiers* and *Ex Nihilo*, and Hart could probably claim the largest following of any living American sculptor.

All in all, an ascension of the Giotto dimension—but one thing was missing: the artistic atmosphere of 14th-century Florence, not to mention a Vasari or two to chronicle his success.

Just what this meant Hart found out in the very first week after the dedication of *Ex Nihilo* in 1982 (two years before the completion of the entire facade). In the press, even the local press, there was nothing, save a single rather slighting remark in passing in the Style section of the *Washington Post*. In the art press in the weeks and months and years that followed—nothing, not even so much as a one-paragraph review. Thirteen years at work on the most important American religious commission of the 20th century, and—*nihil*, a hollow silence. It was as if the west side of Washington National Cathedral, the seventh-largest cathedral in the world, were invisible.

Washington National Cathedral entrance with Ex Nihilo

courtesy of Chesley

But why? As Hart was now able to figure out at his leisure, by the 1980s all work in the Giotto tradition of glorious lifelike human forms, not just his, was being buried in the most ludicrous collapse of taste in the history of the American art world. In the case of sculpture, specifically, matters had plunged to the level of outright farce. The American art "world," as it was known, was in fact a small circle of dealers, museum curators, collectors, and established artists who created and certified reputations. This was not a cabal, simply a circle of fashion. In 1976 the author of *The Painted Word* estimated their number at no more than 3,000 souls nationwide, of whom about 2,700 lived in New York City or nearby. The American art "village," he called it—and yet art critics everywhere, even in the popular press, were content to serve as obedient little subalterns conveying the village's decisions to the public at large. In the 1940s this network was swept by a vogue for abstract art. In the 1950s and 1960s American corporations began building glass towers with bare concrete and granite plazas out front, and in the plazas they began placing abstract sculptures, the favorites being twisted extrusions in the Isamu Noguchi manner and boluses with holes in them à la Henry Moore. Among architects this came to be known as the Turd in the Plaza

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courtesy of Chesley

Ex Nihilo

school of sculpture, after a remark by James Wines, who said, "I don't care if they want to build those boring glass boxes, but why do they always deposit that little turd in the plaza when they leave?"

In the 1970s and the 1980s the art bureaucrats—from such government creations as the National Endowment for the Arts' Art in Public Places program and the General Services Administration's Art-in-Architecture program—came into their own and started promoting the village's latest fashion, "the sculpture of object-ness" (in which sculpture was not supposed to evoke, much less represent, anything other than its "weight" and "gravity" as an object). This led to one howler after another. The bureaucrats kept commissioning large public sculptures that the public loathed, even to the point of going through protracted administrative hearings and court battles to have the loathsome objects, in all of their grave and weighty object-ness, removed. The howler of all howlers came in 1976, when the City of Hartford, Connecticut, approached the National Endowment for the Arts to put up part of the money and find a sculptor to provide a major work for a choice site downtown to celebrate Hartford's eminence as the Athens of western south-central New England. In due course a man named Carl Andre arrived with 36 rocks, huge rocks but just plain rocks from off the ground, and had some unionized elves arrange them in a triangular pattern, like bowling pins. He then presented the City Council with a bill for $87,000. While the citizens hooted and jeered and called them imbeciles, the councilmen tamped the sides of their heads with the heels of their hands—and, prodded by the NEA, paid up.

Vasari attributed all remarkable developments in art history to God. He said that God sent Michelangelo to earth to perfect the art of Florence, and Raphael to prove that a genius among artists could also be a perfectly polite and cultivated gentleman. If he was right, then God sent Carl Andre to Hartford to prove the correctness of the British playwright Tom Stoppard's crack, "Contemporary art is imagination without skill."

In the wake of the Hartford fiasco and many similar ones in the 1980s, Hart and other representational sculptors began to believe that the collapse of taste had finally hit bottom and that a rebirth of figurative sculpture—and skill—must be at hand, even in the New York art village. After all, the Giotto tradition was not dead. It was merely invisible to the village and its subalterns in the provinces. There were still plenty of municipal, institutional, religious, and civic leaders who, wanting to pay tribute to great themes or great individuals, bypassed the art bureaucracies and turned directly to sculptors with skill, skill in portraying the idealized human form, to do it. Prime examples were Hart's *Ex Nihilo*, Raymond Kaskey's *Portlandia*, in Portland, Oregon, Audrey Flack's *Civitas* at Rock Hill, South Carolina, and Eric Parks's *Elvis Statue* (1980) in Memphis.

The public loved the figures they produced, reveled in them, sometimes with startling displays of emotion. When Kaskey's *Portlandia*, a colossal figure of a woman in a toga, arrived in Portland by barge on the Willamette River in 1985, thousands of citizens lined the shore and boulevards, cheering and crying. Parents lifted their children up so they could touch the bronze goddess's outstretched fingertips. The art press, however, continued to ignore such work, as did the museums and major galleries. And so did the art schools. By 1994 there were only half a dozen offering full-scale curricula in the sculpting of the human form. Eighty years ago no sculpture department would have offered anything else.

In 1993 Hart began convening a group of artists, scholars, philosophers, and poets at his home in Virginia to try to create a new aesthetic for the arts generally.

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They go by the name of the Centerists, but their thinking parallels that of a broader movement known as the Idealist school of contemporary representational art. One of the major theorists is Pierce Rice, who argues in his book *Man as Hero* that the great tradition of Western art has been, and should continue to be, not merely representational work but the idealization of the human form, the glorification of both heroic individuals and the heroic possibilities of mankind. At bottom, Idealism rests upon a religious assumption taken for granted in the Renaissance, namely that human beings are created in the image of God.

Within the New York art village such a notion is so *infra dig*, the dealers, curators, collectors, and artists who establish fashions don't even bother to condemn it. They avert their eyes. It is... in *such poor taste*. The tasteful view today is precisely the opposite and, as the Idealists see it, bears out a prediction Nietzsche made just over a hundred years ago when he announced that God was dead. Men no longer believed in God, he said, but they had not shed their own sense of guilt. So henceforth they would still feel guilty but would have no one to turn to for forgiveness, causing them to loathe themselves and one another. As a result, the 20th century would be a century of wars catastrophic beyond all imagining, waged by human beings who looked upon their loathsome selves as no different, morally, from other beasts—mere organisms, one and all, driven on by urges and appetites but constantly starved for meaning in their lives.

Over the past five years, the art village, the circle, has begun to sanction a form of figurative sculpture sometimes called I.C.U. Art (for intensive care unit), in which self-loathing and loathing of the human species reach a nadir, from the Idealist point of view. Typical creations of I.C.U. sculpture are the incinerated and flagellated corpse of a tiny woman with her bloody spinal column popping out through the skin of her back (Kiki Smith, *Untitled*, 1991); a bowl of plums, each plum possessing a screaming human mouth with purple lips and gnashing purple teeth (Rona Pondick, *Plums*, 1993); the lower half of the torso of a man wearing undershorts, ribbed socks, and Topsider sneakers with gaping holes in his legs and left buttock that look like crosses between abscess craters and plumbing drains (Robert Gober, *Untitled*, 1991); and the blackened figure of a man with no eyes, no nose, no mouth, no ears, hogtied in a jack-knifed position (Antony Gormley, *Proof*, 1984). By 1994, the loathing of Homo sapiens among the fashionable sculptors had reached such an intensity that a University of Chicago art historian, Barbara Maria Stafford, was driven to ask: "Why, in order to be serious, do things have to be ugly?"

courtesy of Chesley

Vietnam Veterans Memorial: Three Soldiers

Young sculptors with skills and aspirations resembling Frederick Hart's find themselves in a bind—felt even at the handful of art schools where figurative sculpture is taught. Do they choose the fashionable direction, which at the moment is I.C.U. Art? True, it demands an appetite for the ugly and requires (and tolerates) only minimal skill, but it at least holds out the possibility of being taken seriously by the art worldlings who certify reputations. Or do they choose Idealism, with its guarantee of . . . *eyes averted* . . . perhaps for a lifetime?

As for Hart himself, his career is very likely fireproof. If recent history is any indication, those who want to celebrate Homo sapiens' hopes and feats will continue to seek out his surpassing skill at bringing alive the human form in the tradition Giotto introduced with his models for the campanile of Santa Maria del Fiore, and people will love it. Repeatedly over the past 10 years, the public has demonstrated not merely its preference but its passion for the work of the Harts, the Kaskeys, the Flacks, and the Parkses. The question is whether public pressure will at last crack the art world's much-loathed New York Wall of taste or merely harden it. ♦

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REPEAL RIO

Electrify the World

ACCORDING TO THE WORLD BANK, SEVERAL HUNDRED MILLION WOMEN AND CHILDREN SPEND THEIR DAYS IN DWELLINGS WHERE WOOD AND COW DUNG ARE BURNED FOR ENERGY. The fumes are indoor air pollutants. Breathing them is like smoking three packs of cigarettes per day. The World Health Organization reports 4 million Third World children die each year from acute respiratory disease, no doubt exacerbated by such fumes.

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The justification for this kind of thinking is the Rio Treaty with its focus on limiting carbon dioxide emissions—and as signed in 1992 by former President George Bush with the advice and consent of the US Senate. Should the Rio Treaty be turned into the world's energy law? The answer is "no."

Rio is premised on a one hundred year old theory that catastrophic global warming will result from burning fossil fuels because they emit CO_2, a greenhouse gas. This controversial theory has no support in observations. In the intervening century, climate observations suggest the theory should be discarded, not used as a pretext to curtail industrial activity.

Predictions of future climate conditions generated by general circulation computer models are what the environmental community relies on in defense of *Rio*. But these models are intentionally manipulated so that they predict apocalypse. Existing models cannot replicate actual climate conditions unless they are manipulated. As a result, they fail the first test of computer modelling.

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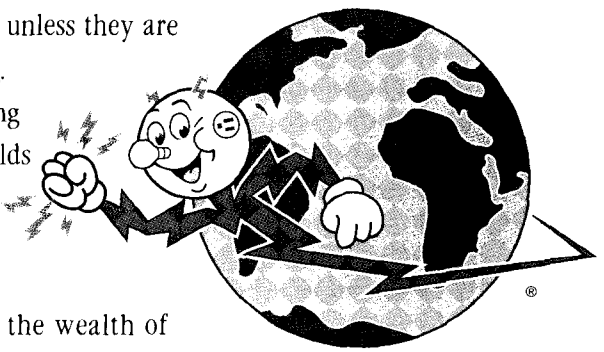

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Women and children in the Third World are not at risk because the wealth of industrialized nations results in CO_2 emissions. Their lives are at risk because their present way of life pollutes their environment. Electrification provides a cure for pollution. But the Third World can never realize the benefits of electrotechnologies so long as energy policy is shaped by limited environmental understanding.

Extending electric service to villages can have a powerful impact. It would free Third World populations from drudgery, greatly improving their living standards and, therefore, their quality of life. In this way, repealing *Rio* would be positive for humanity. **Let's electrify the world with our technology and know-how.**

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